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NATIONAL PICTURES

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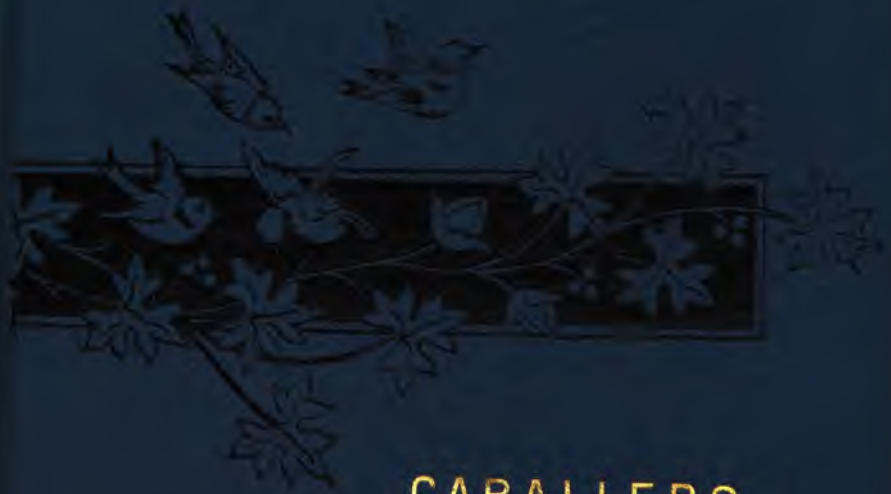

CABALLERO

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NATIONAL PICTURES.

NATIONAL PICTURES.

NATIONAL PICTURES.

From the Spanish of Fernan Caballero. i.e
Cecilia Böhl de Faber

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"*TASSO'S ENCHANTED GROUND.*"

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.
1882.

251. g. 363.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following stories are selected from the popular "Cuadros de Costumbres," which depict in fascinating colours the piety, simplicity, charity, and dignity of Spanish peasant life, as truthfully delineated by the lady assuming the *nom de plume* of Fernan Caballero, distinguished alike by her rank, goodness, and talent, whose works are universally read with delight throughout Spain. In the author's preface to these studies of national character and customs, she says; "It is an undeniable fact that in Spain as elsewhere wickedness exists, nor would we attempt to represent our country as an Arcadia, as may be proved by many bad characters to be found in our novels and sketches, although no undue prominence has been given to these, since we believe that representations of the vices that degrade humanity are ineffectual means of repressing them, and that the best incentive to virtue is the vivid delineation of all that exalts and ennobles mankind. We have sometimes been accused of inventing incidents described as real; but while acknowledging

the implied compliment to our imaginative powers, it seems to us far more important it should be clearly understood that these sketches are really, as they profess to be, exact pictures of the character, customs, and modes of speech of the people of this southern land. We are here gathering up the seeds of a field that will soon cease to bear fruit; for although works of art, coins, and other tangible records of the past may be preserved to future ages, the more subtle intellectual impressions are too easily lost for ever. The feelings of the heart may be buried with it; words may be carried away with the passing breath; and every trace of a national custom become absolutely obliterated."

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SIMON VERDE.

CHAPTER I.

EVERY one who has been on the Guadalquivir must have observed the little towns that are passed on the way to the noble city of Seville, to the right in descending, to the left in ascending the river. La Puebla, that comes first in going up from the sea, is large, compact, destitute of trees, and more devoted to agricultural than to the river and shipping interests. The inhabitants do not take off their *calañes* (hats) either to the grandees, princes, or kings who often pass by them. The second town, named Coria, more ambitious than its neighbour, adorns its banks with gardens, and is proud of the Betis, giving its name to one of the steamers plying upon that river. Coria boasts a manufacture of liquorice, which grows and is prepared here; and is a cheerful place, famous for bull-fights. Gelves, the third of these little towns, rises modestly and gracefully from the

river to the summit of a hill, upon which stand, side by side, forming one edifice, the Church and the Palace of the Counts of Gelves, belonging to the House of Alba. This, the prettiest of the four miniature cities, is built with the symmetry and picturesqueness of a toy village. The last, San Juan de Alfarache, certainly owes the preference it enjoys to its good houses and vicinity to the capital; for in beauty and position the modest rural Gelves has the advantage. Between the latter town and the river a green common extends, and between this common and the platform in front of the church and palace, is a wooded slope of trees and flowers, the houses being scattered on both sides of this shrubbery, especially to the left. This house owes its pompous name of palace morally to the grand arms ostentatiously displayed upon it; actually to the simplicity of the cottages surrounding it. The common by the riverside is divided by a path connecting La Puebla and Coria with the capital, which after crossing Gelves, winds up to a solitary rustic little inn, with melons and oranges clustering near its thatched roof.

When our story begins, it was the peaceful hour of twilight. The sun had set behind the mountain, and the olive-trees were tinged with the reflected glory of the King of light. A refreshing breeze wafted from the river, pervaded the reeds and willow branches, confiding to these gentle friends the secrets which it did not wish to be lost in

the cruel vastness of the ocean. The moon shone brilliantly upon it, as she gradually succeeded the sun, and a boat with white sails glided along the river so swiftly and silently that it might have seemed a shadow but for the clear joyous singing heard from it as it passed.

The labourer, gladly returning home to his rest, heard from afar the bark of the field dog, softened by distance, and made more welcome as a sign of faithful vigilance by the approaching darkness. All timid creatures gained courage; the stars shone forth from their appointed position; thousands of insects, unseen by the enemies that beset them by day, ventured forth; the grasshoppers buzzed and hummed merrily; the glowworms lit their lamps; and the frogs vied in persevering noise and boldness with the indefatigable crickets. The nightingale gave forth from the branches some gentle notes, to tune his melodious throat to the divine *nocturnes* with which he celebrates the month of flowers; and the orange blossom exhaled from its small hard calyx the delicious fragrance that, added to the softness of the air and the delicate moonlight, made this simple rustic scene an ideal Eden. Above all this terrestrial concert, from the high church tower sweetly and solemnly pealed forth the vesper bell; and the countryman, who holds his faith pure as the air he breathes, uncovered his head in prayer.

By the path above mentioned a man was coming

from Seville riding an ass at an easy pace, saying to it from time to time—

"Get on, *Papalina!* you seem to be treading on eggs. Aguedilla will scold you if we are late."

This man was about forty, and was quite Andalusian in style; his features were regular and handsome, his expression a happy mixture of simple-heartedness and cheerful fun; his laugh merry, frank, and kind. He had been a widower for many years, and lived with his mother and his only daughter. Thus placed by fate between old age and youth, he gave a hand to each, and devoted to both with complete self-denial his life and every affection of his heart. He was born at a very pretty farm close to the town, of which his father was manager, and was called *Simon Verde* after it, according to custom in country places. He gained his living by taking every day to Seville a load of the farm produce, which he sold in the streets, and at the same time acted as carrier, fetching and bringing loads. His occupation, added to his amiable character and sociability, had made him much known and beloved, and no one in the town or neighbourhood met him without a kind greeting.

"Hola, Simon Verde! Have you been to Gibraleon * for the oranges out of your own garden you

* The cry of the orange-sellers of Seville is—

"De Gibraleon
Qué ricas que son!"

The best oranges coming from Gibraleon.

sold to-day?" Such was the question of the Alcalde, who was sitting with the mason at the door of the humble inn, when Simon passed there on his ass.

"Yes, Señor, what was I to do? If I cried oranges of Gelves nobody would have bought them, and I will give your honour a proof of it. Last year I bought a load of acorns, and, to say the truth, Señor Alcalde, they were worth nothing!"

"You were probably deceived in them?"

"No, Señor, only I took them to please a *Serrano*, who wished to return to the Sierra."

"Just like you, Simon Verde. Just like you!" said the mason.

"I can't help it. I can't bear to see people in trouble or sorrow, it quite upsets me. But to return to my story. As I went along, I cried them, but did not sell one the whole blessed day. The evening was near, and I did not know what to do with them, when it occurred to me to cry, 'Acorns from Cadiz!'"

The Alcalde burst into a loud laugh, exclaiming: "Don't you know, man, that Cadiz is nothing but stones built upon rocks?"

"Of course I know that there are neither trees nor flowers there. But I said it all the same, and it attracted so much attention that the acorns were soon off my hands."

"And is your wheat good, Simon?" asked the mason.

"How can it be otherwise than good? I never fail to sow it in proper time, and autumn wheat

always comes up well. Autumn is the legitimate sowing time."

"You will be all right, Simon. This year will be one of Pharaoh's fat kine, and not of famine," said the mason.

"Simon, I will buy your harvest in the ear for two thousand reals," said the Alcalde.

"Señor, it costs me more," replied Simon Verde. After some debate, when the mason took the Alcalde's part, the crop was sold for three thousand reals, a ruinous bargain for Simon.

"Well, you have sold your crop, and you will be lucky if you make anything out of it," said the innkeeper, a young, good-natured giant, whom his mother still called "my child," an epithet generally bestowed upon him satirically.

"I don't know how it is, but my money is like the sacristan's, it sings as it comes and sings as it goes," said Simon Verde.

"It's your own fault, Simon Verde," said the Alcalde. "You make enough to be very comfortable. But your kind heart is your ruin; you cannot see a tear, and can never say no."

"Señor, if we did not help each other in this world, what would become of us?"

"Every one would protect himself as he ought, Simon. Didn't you lend Nicholas the carter enough to buy an ox? Has he repaid you?"

"The ox died. Could the poor man pay for a dead thing?"

"You gave money to Matias to mend his roof. Has he paid you?"

"I gave it him on credit, Señor."

"How much did you gain by that and the dead ox?"

"Señor, your honour is always looking on the dark side. I can live without this money; thank God we have never wanted our daily bread."

"But you have a daughter, man."

"I love her more than my life, and she deserves it. She is as bright as the sun, as sweet as honey, and as wise as an old woman. But I need not become a miser for her sake, as some do for their children. I know several who always talk of their children if they are asked to give a *cuarto*, and who would leave their children penniless, if they could take their goods with them into the grave. Your honour was going to seize Juan Martin for the taxes, and I met him in such trouble that I gave him all I had got for my load of oranges. I may never see the thirty reals again, but my broth tasted better to me than a chicken the night I had helped the poor man."

"Go on spending, Simon Verde—you are wonderful! What property you must have!" said the Alcalde, ironically. He felt the allusion unintentionally made to himself by the good man.

"I, Señor? No, indeed. But I owe nothing to your honour or anybody," replied Simon, innocently.

"You will always have what you want," said the mason.

"I hope so. Those who have few wishes are happier than those who have riches. Señores, God be with you, I am wanted at home."

So saying Simon Verde remounted his donkey and crossed the meadow, singing in a sonorous voice.

CHAPTER II.

FROM the plain in front of the palace there is rather an abrupt descent, and at the foot of this ridge stood the house and garden of Simon Verde. Although comfortable, it was small and had no *patio*, but as a *patio* (courtyard) is almost indispensable to the Andalusians, they used as such a paved space levelled in front of the house, and which was protected by a fence rendered necessary by the unevenness of the ground. To this fence some poles were fixed that supported a large arbour, the pride of humble dwellings, with fresh branching plants overhead, so well trained that violence only could uproot them, offering grateful shade from the burning rays of the sun, cooling the hot air, and giving timely warning of, and shelter from, a passing shower. This kind friend fulfils its office without exacting any return, and in autumn, as a parting gift, showers upon the children, who during the summer have cheered it with song and play, enormous clusters of sweet fruit, and then, shedding its now useless leaves, takes its well-deserved winter rest. On the other side of

the fence there were quantities of flowers that leant against the arbour for shade or contrast of colour. In the orchard was a great assemblage of trees, among which the orange-trees ranked first; but the olive-tree was the best represented, and the laurel found no place in this peaceful garden, the produce of which was rather abundant than refined or delicate. There were elephantine cabbages, giraffe-like beets, boa-constrictor radishes, and *dromedarian* beans!

On the morning of the day we made Simon Verde's acquaintance, a number of girls were assembled in the arbour before Simon's house. They were all talking; the flowers were all in bloom, and the birds who had their abode among the branches were singing. As the flowers formed almost a circle, with the girls grouped in the centre, the effect might be compared to that of a Flemish picture or French engraving, in which groups of nymphs or maidens are depicted within a garland of flowers. At the door of the house sat an old woman, of grave, gentle aspect, neatly dressed. This old woman, amidst so many girls, birds, and flowers, was closely attached to them, and they gratefully so to her. She was the grandmother of the girls, the mother of the flowers she had planted, and the Providence of the birds she fed. She still preserved her faculties, though her hearing and sight were both defective, so that when she looked into the arbour she confounded the girls with the flowers, and when she listened she could

not distinguish between the joyous warbling of the birds and the childish talk of her grandchildren.

"The stork is eating his broth," said one of the younger girls, alluding to the noise made by the stork with his beak.

"The poor frogs!" said another. "How they croak at night! Mrs. Frog said to Mr. Frog, 'Ranoque (froggy), is Picuaque come?' Ranoque replied, 'Picuaque is not come.' Then said Mrs. Frog, 'Let us sing the *Reniquiquaque!*'"

"Let us sing the *Reniquiquaque!*" shouted all the girls.

"Children, you deafen me," said the grandmother, "although I don't hear well. Agueda, you are the eldest, try to amuse yourselves more quietly. Play at some game, or guess riddles, or tell stories."

Agueda, who was obedient, told the little army under her to be quiet. Although this girl was not the beauty she seemed to her father, she was very pleasing, as most young girls are. She was a brunette of clear complexion, with a short face, sharp prominent chin, and very low forehead, which made her wear her hair very much turned back from her temples. She had a most becoming smile, which showed her beautiful teeth and formed two dimples in her cheeks. She was tall, graceful, and winning, rather than fascinating or attractive.

Agueda proposed the following riddle to her companions—"A crooked old woman with a creeping son, some very pretty daughters, and a self-asserting

grandson?" None of them guessed it, so Agueda continued: "It is the vine of course, with her tendrils and grapes; and the wine that gets into her head is her grandson."

"Do you hear the cuckoo?" cried one of the girls.

The grandmother, who heard the shrill voice, answered: "The cuckoo is the most disreputable of birds. It goes to the nests of the little birds and eats up their eggs, leaving its own in their place. As soon as the cuckoos are hatched, the greedy birds eat the poor foster-mothers out of their nests."

"Father says," remarked Agueda, "that there is another very clever cunning bird, the bittern. Foxes are very fond of eating them, and one day the bittern said to the fox, that he would find it tasted much better, if before eating it he would say, 'I ate a bittern.' The fox did so when he caught the bittern shortly afterwards, so when he opened his mouth to say, 'I ate a bittern,' it flew away saying 'Not me!'"

"Look," said one of the girls, "here is a white butterfly on this rose to bear our messages to Mary, and a fly to carry them to the devil."

They all watched the fly, saying, "Fly, tell the devil to stay with the Moors in Africa; tell him to find me in St. Michael's Church; tell him I wear a cross round my neck to keep him away."

"Butterfly," said Agueda, "say to our Lady, as we say in the Litany, Ora pro nobis."

As if the butterfly had understood this simple prayer, he rose on his white wings and was lost, like a sweet scent or a soft sound, in the air. The girls all had supper, and went away as the moon was rising.

"Heaven be praised!" said Simon, dismounting from the easy-going *Papalina*, who went at her accustomed pace to her stable, when Simon had unsaddled her.

"Your blessing, mother," added he, approaching the old woman.

"God bless you, my son. Have you sold the oranges?"

"All, and could have sold more if I had had them. But I don't bring back a *cuarto*, mother."

"Why? What have you done with the money?"

"I lent it to the guard of the land adjoining mine. I met him on the road in great tribulation, because this Judas of an Alcalde was going to sell him up for the taxes. How could the poor creature pay taxes, when he has not bread to eat?"

"But, don't you know that we owe money to the baker?"

"Never mind that, mother. He knows he is sure of his money."

"Juan Martin, the guard, is full of treacheries, and you will never see that money again."

"I know that, mother, but what could I do? He will guard my crops well for me if he is under an obligation to me. 'A real that saves a hundred is a good real.'"

"I have no patience with that hard-hearted Al-

calde," said the old woman. "Juan Martin is the cousin of his dead wife."

"The Alcalde," replied Simon, "has become dreadfully avaricious. I heard him with my own ears say the other day of his son Julian, This boy has no love for money, and what can be worse?"

"The richer he becomes the harder and more avaricious he gets," said the good old woman; "this vice hardens the heart more than any. My father had a story that a man of large property married his four daughters, giving to each of them a considerable sum of money. In a year's time he went to see them. 'How are you?' he asked the eldest. 'Father,' said she, 'since my husband had the money he has taken to gambling, neglects me, and gambles it all away.' 'Don't worry yourself; when the money is gone he will have to work and leave off playing, and you will be happy,' said her father. He then went to the second of his daughters, who replied with tears to his inquiry, that her husband was very inconstant, and wasted his money upon other women. 'Never mind,' said her father, 'when he has spent the money he will have to work and end his wanderings, and you will be happy.' The third complained that her husband drank too much, and passed his time in taverns. 'Don't trouble yourself about it,' said the father, 'the money will come to an end, and then he will have to work instead of drinking wine in taverns, and you will be happy.' The fourth replied to her father's inquiry by complaining bitterly of

her husband's avarice, that he did not give her a cuarto, and starved her. 'My poor child, my darling girl,' said her father embracing her, 'I see no end to your misfortune!' This proves," continued the old woman, "that avarice is the vice of the heart. So you did well, my son, to help that poor man. What you lose here you will find elsewhere, and it is better to lay up treasure for eternity than for these few days of temporal life."

"This Alcalde is not worthy of his son," said Simon; "Julian is one of the best and most sensible young men of the town."

"He resembles his mother, who was an angel. She deserved eternal happiness for the patience she had with her husband."

Simon had been looking round ever since he entered the house, as if seeking something, and at last said: "Mother, where is the child? I don't see her."

"Making you a shirt with embroidered front, but she doesn't want you to know it until it is done."

"Agueda, Aguedilla, where are you?" cried the father.

The girl came quickly out of the arbour to meet her father, but at that moment Julian, the Alcalde's son, came carrying a bag of money in his hand. He was a good-looking youth of eighteen, with delicately moulded features, of gallant, modest bearing, timid and amiable, yet not without some quiet determination in manner.

"I bring you the three thousand reals for your crop in the ear," said he to Simon Verde.

"You have sold the wheat?" said the old woman in consternation to her son.

"I did not wish you to know it, mother; but since you do, I will tell you that I sold it because 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

"You were wrong to sell it, Tio Simon," observed the boy, "because it was worth more than was given you for it, as this is likely to be a good year, and my father was told so. I was more sorry when I heard of it than if the loss had been my own."

"It is the bread of the whole year, my son," exclaimed the mother sorrowfully.

"We can't undo it now, mother. Take the three thousand reals, and we will spend them in corn at harvest-time. Your father caught me, Julian, and the mason helped. But I would rather be taken in than take others in."

The old woman took away the money.

"Count it—it is better to be on the safe side," remarked Julian to Simon, who had not thought of it, but followed his mother to do so.

"Agueda, give me this carnation," said Julian to the girl when they were alone.

"No."

"Why do you want to keep it?"

"To wear as you see."

"And why?"

"To please my father."

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courageous, but not reckless, and so he first reflected:
"It is not a bull, or it would make more noise,
neither is it a fox or a wolf, or it would make less.
It is a biped like myself, and hides itself for some
good reason that's no affair of mine. It may be a
party gathering rushes." Hardly had he come to
this conclusion when a man of ferocious appearance
rose from the rushes, and came up to him. "I
have no gun, and am alone," thought Simon, appar-
ently unmoved.

"Heaven keep you, good man," said the stranger.

"And me?"

"I don't care about that." Agueda made a pretty gesture of disdainful indifference, in which the woman eclipsed the child as the full-blown rose does the bud.

"Already disdainful? So much the better," said Julian. "They always say,

'For carnations the earth
Ever brown should be sought;
And the maiden who frowns
On a man loves him best.'

Will you give me the carnation?"

"This carnation is the best on the plant. I would rather give you my heart," exclaimed Agueda.

"Then give it me, and keep the carnation."

"Neither," retorted Agueda.

"Do you mean to be a nun?"

"I haven't thought about it yet."

"Then what do you care for?"

"The carnation," said the girl, running into the house.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning Simon set out with his inseparable companion, the good *Papalina*, for a neighbouring estate, where he generally bought pickled olives to sell in Seville. With the sudden change of weather often seen in spring, the sky was threatening that morning, and great drops of rain fell, eagerly

absorbed by the earth. "If I had not sold my crop there would have been no rain," murmured Simon, as he went along.

Simon was passing through the olive-yards that extend for some distance outside the town, and crossing a reedy bog wetted by the stagnant waters of a small sluggish spring. He was arguing with himself as to having been persuaded to sell his wheat, and from time to time said in a broken voice: "It can't be helped. In this world one cries and another laughs. The covetousness of this Alcalde is, like the mercy of God, infinite!" He was so absorbed in his thoughts that only a strange and unusual occurrence could attract his attention. Papalina, without quickening her pace, suddenly raised her enormous ears and fixed her eyes upon the marsh, and Simon, following her example, saw and heard the reeds move. Like most countrymen, accustomed to all kinds of risks and dangers, he was courageous, but not reckless, and so he first reflected: "It is not a bull, or it would make more noise, neither is it a fox or a wolf, or it would make less. It is a biped like myself, and hides itself for some good reason that's no affair of mine. It may be a gipsy gathering rushes." Hardly had he come to this conclusion when a man of ferocious appearance issued from the rushes, and came up to him. "I have no gun, and am alone," thought Simon, apparently unmoved.

"Heaven keep you, good man," said the stranger.

101

And you also. What can I do for you, Senor Verde?

You can save me."

What can you mean?"

I am pursued, and if I am caught I

My crime is to fight for

Are you a rebel?"

Others call me"

Senor," said Simon, with a

at his companion, "I would as soon

would not care to

Why don't you

Are you also a rebel?"

Horses and money, no. Pardon me, Senor:

a peaceful, steady-going man, and don't want

myself up with troublesome affairs."

Give me then a bit of bread; I have been two

in this log without food," said the stranger,

whose face looked pinched with hunger.

Simon instantly felt the utmost compassion for

stranger, exclaiming—

Why didn't you say so at once? I haven't got

bread with me, but if you will wait here I will

some directly."

the man could prevent it Simon had

leaving him face to face with Pepillo,

being given to politics, did not make any

so-called Carlist

The stranger stamped his foot, and murmured anxiously: "I wonder if he has only fled, or gone to denounce me? In any case where can I go, when all the roads are held by cavalry? No; the country people are not informers; he has only run away. I will hide again till night, and then seek shelter."

He had hardly concealed himself behind the thick rushes when he saw Simon Verde with a loaf of bread in his hands, looking for him. The pursued man hastily left his concealment, and seized the bread eagerly, saying repeatedly: "God repay you for this act of charity!"

"But, man," replied Simon, "who would not feed the hungry? My father's son has never known fear nor hunger. But I can imagine what it is to be hungry."

"Then think what it must be to be hunted like a wild beast, to have no place to rest your head, and to be in a strange country, knowing that if you are caught you will be shot."

Like all charitable souls, who begin to feel the pleasure of performing a kind work, Simon was anxious to complete it, but did not see how to carry it through.

"In a few days I could escape, but now we are so watched and the frontiers so guarded that not a bird could escape," continued the stranger.

"You had better remain where you are a few days longer, and I will bring you bread, as the

"And you also. What can I do for you?" replied Simon Verde.

"You can save me."

"What can you mean?"

"I am pursued, and if I am caught shall be shot. My crime is to fight for the *legitimate* King Carlos V."

"Then you are a rebel?"

"So traitors call us."

"But, Señor," said Simon, with a penetrating glance at his companion, "I should say Señor Don Carlos de Bourbon would not care to have his name used in this way. Why don't you fight openly like the others?"

"We are here to recruit soldiers."

"And horses and money too. Pardon me, Señor; I am a peaceful, steady-going man, and don't want to mix myself up with troublesome affairs."

"Give me then a bit of bread; I have been two days in this bog without food," said the stranger, whose face looked pinched with hunger.

Simon instantly felt the utmost compassion for the stranger, exclaiming—

"Why didn't you say so at once? I haven't got any bread with me, but if you will wait here I will bring some directly."

Before the man could prevent it Simon had disappeared, leaving him face to face with Papalina, who, not being given to politics, did not take any notice of the so-called Carlist.

The stranger stamped his foot, and murmured anxiously: "I wonder if he has only fled, or gone to denounce me? In any case where can I go, when all the roads are held by cavalry? No; the country people are not informers; he has only run away. I will hide again till night, and then seek shelter."

He had hardly concealed himself behind the thick rushes when he saw Simon Verde with a loaf of bread in his hands, looking for him. The pursued man hastily left his concealment, and seized the bread eagerly, saying repeatedly: "God repay you for this act of charity!"

"But, man," replied Simon, "who would not feed the hungry? My father's son has never known fear nor hunger. But I can imagine what it is to be hungry."

"Then think what it must be to be hunted like a wild beast, to have no place to rest your head, and to be in a strange country, knowing that if you are caught you will be shot."

Like all charitable souls, who begin to feel the pleasure of performing a kind work, Simon was anxious to complete it, but did not see how to carry it through.

"In a few days I could escape, but now we are so watched and the frontiers so guarded that not a bird could escape," continued the stranger.

"You had better remain where you are a few days longer, and I will bring you bread, as the

raven did to St. Paul, the first hermit," observed Simon.

"Am I safe here? This olive-yard will be searched, and I shall be found. If you could hide me in your house for a day or two, they would not seek me there, and I should be saved."

"If it were known I should be called an abettor, and I should have to smart for it."

"How should it be known? How many good souls have already given me shelter! If I were but in the Sierra! There the people do not draw back from saving a follower of the *legitimate* king."

"Say no more about your *legitimate* king. We don't agree about that. It is a question of saving a fellow-creature, and I will do it; for if you were caught and put to death, I should reproach myself as long as I live. You certainly can't stay here with water all round you, unless you turn into a frog. Be behind the church here near the olive-yards, to-night after the *Angelus*. At that hour only cocks and lovers watch. But you will go away in two days?"

"By this," said the stranger, making the sign of the cross.

"Then it is settled; goodbye," said Simon, calling Papalina, who was munching thistles not far off. Simon went on his way, avoiding the *hacienda* where he had asked for the bread, and then returned home, prepared and cleaned a cock-loft, and seating himself by his mother's side with a smile, said—

"Mother, we have a guest to-night."

"Who may this be? a dear friend of yours?"

"No, Señora; no friend of mine, God forbid! He is a rebel, mother, of the worst sort. If they catch him he will soon be despatched, which would be horrible."

"My son, if he is discovered, God knows how you will get out of it! At least, it will take all you have to do so."

"True, mother, I have foreseen this; but when I found him he was dying of want and hunger. He told me he had no shelter; he got over me. What could I do? I wish I had never met him. Still, if I must have anything to regret, I would rather it were for having saved a fugitive than for having refused to help my neighbour, as God commands."

"True, my son; do right for the sake of right," said the good old woman.

At the *Angelus* bell Simon left his house. A young man was observing him from behind an orange-tree, and as he left the orchard a man hid himself in a corner; but he saw neither.

The boy was Julian, attracted by the girl and the carnation; the man was the Alcalde, who had noticed the *escapade* of his son, and was watching him.

"What can the father of Agueda be doing at this hour? Is any one ill?" thought Julian.

"Where can Simon Verde be going so late? For no good purpose!" thought the Alcalde.

Simon ascended to the church and palace, which,

silent and solitary, looked more imposing in the sad moonlight. As he passed the church door he took off his hat, thinking, "This door also is closed to none who knock at it." He reached the place named to the stranger, whom he found awaiting him.

"Don't lose sight of me, or come too near, lest you should be taken," said he.

"I trust to you entirely," said the pursued man in a hollow voice. "Am I doing right?"

"Do I look like a traitor? It is evident you don't know Simon Verde! You must leave your suspicions outside my house, where there is no room for them," said Simon, indignantly.

Simon entered his house, and the stranger soon followed him.

"Who can it be? He looks to me like the son of the manager of Porsuna," thought Julian. Upon reflection he murmured, "Agueda is very young for them to think of marrying her."

Simon took his guest to the garret prepared for him, went away, and soon afterwards came back with a loaf, a sausage, a few oranges, and a bottle of water.

"Now you are lodged here safely. May you rest and sleep St. John's sleep, which lasted three days."

"Perhaps I may be able to make you some return if we conquer, as we should have done in the Sierra, had there been more of my sort," said the other.

"Don't talk nonsense," said Simon, interrupting his guest. "I don't require any return. I only wish

to get you out of your danger, and then, Goodbye. I am poor, but never yet did things for reward."

"Are you poor? I thought you seemed very comfortable and had money," remarked the stranger.

"Then you are mistaken. I have nothing but this orchard. I had a crop of wheat that I set my hopes upon, but the devil tempted me to sell it. The Alcalde got it from me for three thousand reals; all I possess. People do too much as they like with me; but if I am not rich in money I have a mother worth Peru, and a daughter worth an empire."

While this conversation was going on, Agueda, in her girlish curiosity, had come on tiptoe to the loft, and peeping through a hole in the wall examined the stranger; after which, fearing to meet her father, she went away as she had come to the house. Suddenly, she gave an exclamation of surprise and terror at seeing a figure come from behind an orange-tree.

"Be quiet, Agueda, it is I," said a gentle well-known voice.

"What a fright you gave me, Julian. What are you doing here?" said Agueda.

"I am come for the carnation."

"It is better in my hair than your hands."

"Perhaps, if it likes to be seen, but not if it prefers to be esteemed. But first, where do you come from?"

"It is no business of yours."

"Did you come because you knew I was here?"

"Don't think it. You know I came from the cock-loft."

"What were you doing there?"

"Looking at a man who was there with my father."

"Is he young?"

"He is as old as the hills."

"Is he good-looking?"

"A fine man. His eyes are like a mad dog's; his nose like raw meat; his mouth like a sausage, and his complexion chocolate colour!"

"Who can he be?"

"Some gipsy who comes to sell father pigs."

"Very well. Now will you give me the carnation?"

"Don't you see I am not wearing it?"

"Will you give it me to-morrow?"

"No more than to-day. See, here is my father."

"I will go if you promise to give it me to-morrow," said the boy, holding Agueda's dress.

"No."

"Then when?"

Simon Verde drew near.

"On Ascension Day," said the girl, hastily, gliding silently away among the trees.

"Ascension Day, eh?" said Simon Verde, who had overheard this. "The boys and girls begin early. What are you doing here, Julian, my boy?"

"Tio Simon—I came to ask you if you would bring me to-morrow from Seville—an—an—Almanack?"

"To find out Ascension Day? What I shall bring from Seville is a lock for my door. Your father looks high, and will not consent to this courtship; and as my daughter is not to be slighted by any one, your father must first come forward. So Julian, although I like you, you must not come here again. Goodnight, my boy."

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day Simon Verde took his load of olives to Seville, sold them well, and, reconciled to the bad sale of his wheat, returned home cheerful and contented as usual, but he was taken prisoner at his own door, to his great consternation.

"Just like my luck again," thought he. "They have caught the rebel, and I am ruined. What sorrow for my mother and daughter!"

"Simon," said the Alcalde, when he was brought before him, "there has been a requisition for a factious rebel, who is said to be about here. Last night you hid a man in your house. Say who it was."

"I hid no one in my house," replied Simon, truthfully.

"The house will be searched," said the Alcalde, "and if you persist in denying it, and the man is

found, you will be accused of aiding and abetting him."

Simon looked around without knowing what to reply, when he met a reassuring glance from Julian, who then went out unobserved; Simon, who understood Julian's noble feelings, felt sure that his intention was to save him by giving notice that the house was to be searched in time for the guilty man to fly. So he thought he would try to gain time, and calmly said to the Alcalde:

"Señor, I am bewildered, because this is the first time I have ever been in the hands of justice. Has your honour ever been arrested, Señor Alcalde?"

"How dare you ask me such a question?" said the Alcalde, angrily; "am I a man likely to do anything for which I could be arrested?"

"Señor, you need not be offended. In these days many men who live in grand houses have got themselves into trouble. Your honour might have been under a cloud by mistake, like your humble servant."

"Simon," said the Alcalde uneasily, "this is no time for joking. It is like a *fandango* at a funeral. Let us come to the point. A man entered your house last night; you cannot deny it."

"No man but myself entered my house last night, Señor Alcalde," repeated Simon.

"Why, I saw him myself," said the Alcalde, exasperated at Simon's reiterated denials of the accusation.

"Then your honour is the witness?" said Simon with a bitter smile. "But I will not deny, Señor Alcalde, that a man entered my garden; and this man, Señor, was your son, who would make himself at home in the king's house if he liked."

Those present could not repress their smiles, which further exasperated the Alcalde, whose vanity was wounded by Simon's words, and he said vindictively: "I shall take care my son does not honour your house again by his visits. It will now be searched."

"I am sorry," said Simon more quietly, "that my mother did not expect your honour, or the house should have been in better order to receive you."

The Alcalde, full of rage and annoyance, followed by the notary and a boy, went with Simon to his house. All that the jovial Simon Verde had said only to gain time and make light of the affair, had been misinterpreted by the Alcalde, who saw defiance and insult in his harmless words, and was embittered against him; all the more on account of having discovered the previous night that his son was running after Simon's daughter. The perverse notary, his principal confidant, had also told him that the whole town was on the side of the popular Simon Verde in the hard bargain the rich skinflint had made with the poor agriculturist. It is needless to say that Julian had warned Simon Verde's mother, who on going to warn the stranger found that, as if having a presentiment of what had

happened, he had fled. Therefore, although they searched the house and its dependencies, no trace of the rebel was found, and the Alcalde was furious, because, having asserted that Simon had concealed a man who could not be discovered, his domiciliary visit would appear to everybody an act of arbitrary despotism.

"I saw a man enter here last night; he is not found; that proves that he has escaped, and until this be cleared up, you will remain a prisoner, Simon Verde," said the Alcalde.

"For heaven's sake, Señor," said the poor man in dismay, "who will get our daily bread to-morrow? Who can sell a load of vegetables already gathered?"

The mother began to weep, and all present interceded for Simon.

"To free him then," said the Alcalde, "I must have some one, or, at least, some money, as security until I can release him."

"I can give that," replied Simon. "Mother, give the three thousand reals you have in the box to the Señor."

His mother rose hastily, and opened the box with a cry of dismay, for the money had disappeared!

'What is the matter with you, mother?" asked Simon.

"We have been robbed!" exclaimed the old woman, distressed.

The misfortune was equally cruel and unforeseen;

and Simon and his mother were too ingenuous to conceal the fact of its indubitable cause.

"It can have been no one but that man!" said the old woman, in terrible grief.

"Fool that I was to tell him of this money!" added Simon, striking his head frantically.

"Then, apparently, you have had a stranger in your house," remarked the Alcalde, triumphantly.

"To my misfortune I have, Señor," replied Simon. "I met this false serpent dying of hunger, and within an ace of being shot. I took pity on him, Señor; I gave him food, Señor; I protected and hid him, Señor. This was but a good deed, Señor, after all! And see my reward! He must be bad indeed!"

"Did you know him?"

"I knew nothing whatever of him."

"But yet you knew he was a rebel?"

"I knew he must have done something wrong to be afraid of being shot; it could not be for telling his beads."

"But you knew he was a rebel?"

"What if I did, Señor?"

"Only then you would have connived at, and given protection and support to the faction."

"I didn't, indeed, Señor. You must know that as well as I do. I gave shelter to a homeless man; he robbed me in return. If your honour punishes me again it will be pouring boiling water on my scalds."

"I must fulfil my duty, or I too may be suspected," said the Alcalde pompously.

"For heaven's sake, Señor," implored poor Simon, "your honour will surely not ruin and destroy a friend!"

"One cannot accompany one's friends to the lower regions," replied the Alcalde.

It would be sad to follow out in detail the case made out against Simon Verde, and the petty pretexts under which lawyers and hypocrites fleeced him until he was ruined. In how many secret and mysterious *embroglios* are the poor entangled in country towns, where justice is too often in the hands of the meanest and most despicable of tyrants!

When all Simon's resources were exhausted, tormented by his creditors, and prosecuted for the costs of this serious trial, he was obliged to sell his land by auction, and the Alcalde by his intrigues bought it for a third of its value. To complete the disaster, Simon's faithful and only possession, Papalina, was also sold. The good man was almost heartbroken when he saw the poor animal, who had fallen into the notary's hands, taken from the stable where she had rested during her whole life, and barbarously driven by the children of her new owner, recoil from their blows, and turn her head back to look after her loved master. Agueda cried bitterly, and so did Simon, when he was alone.

No one could have seen without sympathy the desolate old woman leaving her home.

"Keep up, mother," said Simon, repressing his grief not to aggravate hers; "Matias, to whom I lent the money to thatch his house, which he has not been able to repay, says that we can live in his house as long as he has one. So you see we are not yet in the street, nor without friends."

"Ah!" exclaimed the unhappy old woman, "in this homestead, which has descended from father to son like a freehold for so many years, you were all born. There your good father died! The orange-trees under which I sat used to feel for me and console me for all we had survived together, when they were crowned with blossom, and I surrounded by my grandchildren. How delightful was the shade of our arbour! Who will gather the flowers I planted, or feed my forsaken birds?"

"Señora, do not grieve. We take a good conscience with us wherever we go; it will be a soft bed, and we shall sleep well upon it. Those are to be pitied who have not that." Simon mentally added, "Confounded thief! And the wicked Alcalde, striking a fallen tree! Heaven reward them!" He continued aloud, seeing his mother's tears, "God will not fail us, Señora. You must remember how Job was raised to glory, and how the rich miser was tormented"—muttering to himself, "Your turn will come, Señor Alcalde. You have had no pity upon this venerable head, honoured by all in the place. Mother," continued Simon, as she still sorrowed, "do not weep—you break my heart. The world is

not yet at an end—you have me, and our dear child. I shall always be able to earn our living, and she to sow flowers on your path. Wherever we may be I shall take care of you; she will be happy, and God will be with us!"

CHAPTER V.

SEVERAL years had passed. The family we write of had suffered like a transplanted tree; but with time, the great human consoler, and his gentle daughter habit, the tree had taken root again, and even bloomed; in other words, they were happy. Nicholas, the carter, having come into some money, had repaid poor Simon Verde for the deceased ox, and this sum enabled Simon to recover Papalina by paying the notary double what he had given for her. Simon was thus able to continue his former way of living. Papalina showed her pleasure at finding herself once more by her old friend's side in a demonstrative manner. Tia Ana (Simon's mother) attended to her flowers, fed her birds, spun, and prayed; Agueda wore carnations, and sang, because her love for Julian, declared over a carnation, had grown on both sides in the shade of mystery, as the moon shines brightest in the silent darkness of night. This secresy was caused not only by the instinctive modesty of true love, but by the conviction of both that their fathers would never sanction it, the one

from innate dignity, the other (who wished to marry Julian to the daughter of a rich farmer of La Puebla) from avarice. Besides which, the Alcalde felt the hatred to Simon Verde, invariably persevered in by those who have injured another, when Simon Verde no longer resented the persecution he had endured.

The good grandmother knew of this love, and used to say, "Agueda, my child, of what are you thinking?"

"Of our love, *Madre* Ana," answered Agueda.

"It can come to nothing, dear. You must think of to-morrow."

"We only think of to-day, *Madrecita*."

"Young people have no sense. You will have to shed an ocean of tears."

"If I have to shed them, the later the better, grandmother, dear."

"God wills all things!" said the old woman, sighing.

"The Alcalde won't have his own way in this. We must wait for what is worth having, grandmother," answered Agueda.

Meanwhile the inhabitants of Gelves opened their eyes and mouths wide, when one day the palace unexpectedly became quite lively. Balconies and windows were opened, and the great door was left ajar. Those solitary, deserted rooms were cleaned, and all hitherto undisturbed insects that had there congregated, were mercilessly routed and destroyed.

"What is going to happen at the palace? is the Infanta coming?" said the people of the place.

That evening a boat stopped at the creek of the river, landing a lady and gentleman and some luggage. The gentleman, who was about forty, was tall and fat. He wore an enormous Hungarian hat, a most showy and eccentric dress. He talked pompously and condescendingly, and was freer of words than money, to judge from a dispute he had with the boatman about a *real*.

The lady, although she looked extremely pale and thin, was lively, noisy, and affable. She wore a pink bonnet, a gay over-trimmed mantle, a plaid silk dress, all somewhat faded like herself. She had a tarnished brooch, a glittering fan and bracelets, and a little barking dog. In the inn a few neighbours witnessed and discussed the arrival of the strangers, who entered the palace, and made themselves at home there. The lady appeared at all the balconies of the palace, singing snatches of new operas, and exclaiming "How beautiful!" It certainly would be difficult to find a finer view than that which the palace of Gelves affords in point of grandeur and beauty of perspective. From the palace the land descends to the wooded orchards and meadow beneath, and is lost in the river to re-appear on the opposite bank clothed with verdure, and bordered with lofty trees. The river flows peacefully between these wooded banks, troubled only by the occasional passage of a swift steamer. The view is bounded

by the distant mountains of Ronda, lost in the clouds, if clouds there be in that sky in spring. On the left Seville may be seen in solemn grandeur.

"Don't sing, Fornarina, the doctors have forbidden it," said the gentleman, smoking. He called himself Colonel Titan, but his claim to that title was never properly authenticated.

"Do you care for what the doctors say?" answered La Fornarina, with a marked Italian accent.

We have never been able to ascertain how these illustrious guests obtained possession of the palace, but it is certain that the pure air and famed waters of Gelves agreed with La Fornarina, to judge from her gradual improvement in looks, and from her loud laughter, while she reigned there with the imposing Colonel Titan. The Andalusians are rarely deceived in their estimate of those of a superior class to themselves, and in a few days the women turned up their noses, and the men laughed openly at the inhabitants of the palace of Gelves.

"I should say they were some kind of impostors," remarked one to the other. "This Don Orondo," said a woman, "is a perfect heretic, and bounces about breaking *tallas*.[1] And as for her, she is like a mad tragedy queen, and no lady. I can't think how Simon Verde can allow his daughter to be so much with her."

[1] *Talla*, a jar of porous earthenware, used to cool water in the summer by the people of Andalusia.

"Simon Verde never sees any harm in anybody," said a man.

"Because he is so good himself," observed a woman.

"It is true. But in this world one must be wary," replied the man.

In fact, Simon Verde being the carrier to Seville, he daily went to Colonel Titan's house, to bring him the provisions not sold in the town, where there was no market, nor butcher's, nor other well-stored shops. Simon likewise took charge of the colonel's correspondence with a gay dashing young man called Captain Bulle, who had been everywhere, seen everything, and knew everybody; and Simon's good-natured, jovial manner had also pleased La Fornarina, who liked to talk to him, ask him questions, and inquire into all the particulars of his life.

"Señor Simon, how much do you earn a-day?" asked she one evening, when he went to take orders for the following morning.

"One day with another, I make about a *peseta*,[1] Señora," answered Simon.

"Not more than that? Oh, poor Señor Simon! What a miserable, hopeless life!" exclaimed *La Fornarina* tragically.

"Not at all, Señora. I am quite happy, thank God."

"With a *peseta*? It is not enough to live upon."

[1] A *Peseta* is four *reals*, a *real* being worth about three pence.

"It is more than enough for me, Señora. You must know that on a *peseta* a day I fulfil my duties, pay a debt, lend on interest, and put into a treasury."

"You are jesting!"

"No, indeed, Señora. By keeping myself and my family I fulfil a duty; by supporting my mother I pay a debt; by bringing up my daughter I lend on interest, for she will repay me when I am too old to work; and I lay up a treasure by never refusing alms to a poor person."

La Fornarina looked thoughtful for a moment, and then said to Simon, "Then you have a daughter?"

"A daughter too good for me. If your honour could only see her!" said Simon.

"I should like to see her," exclaimed La Fornarina. "Can she do needlework?"

"She can do anything," answered Simon.

"Then bring her to me, Señor Simon; I should like to know her. I will give her some work. My clothes have become quite dilapidated in this wild country."

Simon, who could never say no, and saw no harm in his daughter going there, took Agueda to see La Fornarina, who was so much pleased with her that she at once gave her a handsome mother-of-pearl fan, with a broken handle, and a pretty odd ear-ring.

Then Simon Verde received much kindness for a time, in return for his zealous services to Colonel

Titan. The person who disliked these new acquaintances was Julian. One evening, when the Alcalde was away and Simon in Seville, the lovers were talking from a balcony looking out upon the fields.

"Agueda," said Julian, "why do you go from home so much, to these strange people? Their airs and graces are insufferable to me, and I have no opinion of them. They are very bad style."

"I go because my father tells me to," replied Agueda, "and I earn there a few cuartos to get him some new clothes, poor fellow! He wants them so much. I don't like the people any better than you do, Julian," replied she.

"You grieve me by going, Agueda."

"I am sorry, but how can I refuse?"

"Women can find reasons enough for refusing, if they like."

"Then for a whim of yours we must suffer loss? Let me get enough for a few things for my father, and a petticoat for grandmother."

"When we are married they shall want for nothing."

"Meanwhile we must do the best we can. After all the injury your father has done us, it would be too bad of you to prevent my going to the palace."

Julian was silenced by this painful allusion to his father's conduct to Simon.

"Agueda, the day will come," said he.

"Then don't anticipate it," replied Agueda.

"Will you always love me, Agueda?"

"Julian, this question is an insult. Do you doubt me?"

"The more we love, the more we fear, Agueda."

"The more esteem, the more confidence, Julian."

The Alcalde, out of curiosity, had called upon the pompous Colonel Titan, but this personage, who was the cousin of seven marchionesses, the uncle of five countesses, and the intimate friend of three duchesses, had not condescended to return the visit of a village Alcalde; and the offended dignitary, resenting the slight, resolved to watch closer the movements of the Colonel and his acquaintances. The most suspicious of these was Captain Bulle, who always passed the Alcalde in the most impertinent manner when he met him. The frequent visits of this Captain Bulle were not only out of compliment to the Colonel, for he had fallen desperately in love with the pretty modest Agueda, who often sat at work near the window of the ante-room, with a carnation in her smoothly-parted hair. A few compliments very coldly received by Agueda made her rise to go away, and the Captain was obliged to look and sigh in vain upon all other occasions.

CHAPTER VI.

THE period of this simple story was one of revolutionary disturbances, which broke forth in various places until they were put down with a firm and strong hand. Such unsettled epochs are favourable to the intrigues of swaggering adventurers like the so-called Colonel Titan, who are ready to become leading members of any society having for its object to deride religion, destroy faith, oppose all existing power, and encourage license of every kind under the pretence of "regenerating" humanity!

One day there was a rumour that a plot of this kind had been discovered in Seville, and that some arrests had been made in consequence. The Alcalde, always on the watch, saw Captain Bulle arrive, looking grave and crestfallen.

At the Angelus hour, Simon Verde, who was eating his supper, received a summons from the Colonel.

"Do not go; these people can want you for no good purpose at this hour," said his mother.

"They have only forgotten some commission they had to give me for Seville," replied Simon.

Simon went to the palace, where he found the important Titan pacing uneasily about the spacious drawing-room, and Captain Bulle, much cast down, seated upon a chair.

"Simon," said the former, "you are a man of

honour and a citizen; I have a great respect for you."

Simon was amazed at this profession of respect from a man who had always treated him with marked *hauteur.*

"I believe I can safely entrust you with an important and lucrative charge?" continued Titan.

"Señor, I understand nothing but the simplest business," replied Simon, who began to suspect something in which he might be compromised.

Titan stamped his foot angrily, but, controlling himself, added, "You must conceal this gentleman," pointing to the Captain, "who is a glorious victim to despotism. Here is some gold," said he, placing some gold pieces on the table; "and when the Señor is safe you shall receive as much more."

Simon, without looking at the gold, scratched his ear.

"Do you hesitate?" exclaimed the Colonel emphatically. "Can the noble patriotism and sacred purpose of this gentleman not rouse your courage to save him?"

Simon Verde shook his head and replied, "Your honour must know that I listened once before to a man who talked about the good of his country, and I paid very dearly for it. The proverb says, Señor, 'Do not pass again the door of the dog who has bitten you!'"

"Do not insult this gentleman by comparisons. Consider that he is a martyr to liberty, a defender of the rights of the people."

"I cannot understand all these arguments, Señor, and what I don't understand does not convince me. All I know is that the Señor is an outlaw, as the other was, and I cannot mix myself up with felony."

Simon turned to go away, when La Fornarina burst into the room, with flowing hair, and in a flood of tears throwing herself tragically at his feet. Simon, who had seen his mother's silent grief at leaving her home, was much touched by this noisy demonstrative sorrow.

"Will you not save a persecuted hero, good Simon? Have pity upon us," she gasped convulsively.

The good man, unable to resist her passionate entreaties, promised what was wished. But warned by experience, he took precautions, making Captain Bulle disguise himself as a woman, and leave the house by a window, entering Simon's by a secret door. He was then obliged to enter a garret by means of a ladder afterwards removed by Simon. He had not accepted the gold, for although he made the most of the oranges he fairly sold, his noble nature instinctively shrank from putting a price upon a deed of charity. It seemed to him as dishonourable to receive payment for a kindness, as for a woman to sell her love. The Alcalde did not, to his annoyance, make any discovery that night.

The following morning Colonel Titan and La Fornarina had disappeared, and a party who came

to search the palace found no trace of its recent inhabitants.

Simon Verde continued for some days going to and coming from Seville, and the Captain remained hidden in the garret.

"I would bet a horse to a hen that Simon Verde is mixed up in this," said the Alcalde.

"Why should Simon have anything to do with it, Señor?" answered some one who heard the Alcalde say this.

"Because I caught him once, and I don't trust him. Besides he was very great with them, and those who measure oil grease their hands."

But Julian was the most grieved about it, for Agueda, unwilling to deceive him, had confided to him that the Captain was hidden in the house, although she had been careful not to inform him of the disagreeable attentions forced upon her by the violent and unscrupulous suitor.

Julian had a friend in the innkeeper, "mi niño," who had once been his father's servant, was devoted to Julian, and would do anything for him.

Meanwhile, poor Agueda saw her father's anxiety, suffered from her lover's jealousy, and had the mortification of hearing the passionate declamations of the Captain, when she mounted the ladder to take him his food. The Captain daily wrote and received letters. One night he said, on reading one—

"Señor Simon Verde, I hear that to-morrow my pardon will arrive."

"Hurrah!" said Simon, delighted.

"It has to pass through various forms, but they expect to be able to send it me to-morrow. However, I must ask you to stay at the inn till it arrives, which may not be before evening," said the guest.

"I will wait there for it with pleasure," replied Simon, gladly seeing himself about to be freed from a compromising affair that worried him more and more each day. "But you must solemnly swear to say nothing until I am far from here."

"Not a word," answered Simon, cheerfully.

The following day Simon waited in vain at the appointed hour; no one appeared with the promised pardon. He then sadly returned home, but the road seemed long to him, on account of his annoyance, and of the extreme darkness of the night.

"How tiresome it is!" thought he; "the Alcalde is just as sour as ever, and would be too glad to find us out in anything. We must not be discouraged, however. If the pardon has not come to-day, it will, please God, to-morrow."

As Simon approached his house at Gelves, he heard his mother exclaim, crying: "Son, he has fled!"

"Be quiet, mother—if he is gone, so much the better!"

"But—but—my dear son," said his mother, still crying bitterly.

"What?" asked Simon anxiously.

"He has carried off the child!"

"Maria Santisima!" exclaimed the unhappy father,

"which way did they go? tell me quickly—what road did they take?"

"No one saw or heard them," replied his mother, sobbing. Simon threw his hat on the ground, and tore his hair wildly.

"Child of my heart, you may now be calling in vain upon your father! A horse! a horse! a gun!" exclaimed Simon, rushing to seek both. "Neighbours, companions! Lend me a helping hand to prevent one of the most atrocious crimes ever imagined by a God-forsaken man! As you are Christians, Señores, help a father whose daughter has been torn from his house!"

The neighbours assembled around the distracted father with indignant sympathy. Many brought horses, mules, and guns, preparing themselves, with the ready kindness of the country people, to accompany Simon, when the swift heavy tread of horses was heard, and before it was possible to distinguish the new comers, Agueda was in her father's arms, accompanied by Julian and Joaquin, "mi niño!"

"Father, Julian has saved me!" murmured Agueda in her father's ear.

"Julian," said Simon earnestly, "you ruined me, and you have saved me! I could kiss the ground you walk on. I am yours for life, to the last drop of blood in my veins!"

Briefly, what had happened was this. At nightfall the Captain told Agueda that his friends were

coming for him, and begged her, by means of a folded paper, to find out if they were in the olive-yard close by. Greatly surprised, Agueda hastened to do what he wished, and a man immediately came forward. Agueda at once announced him to the Captain, and placed the ladder against the garret-window that he might descend, which he did without saying a word, and Agueda quietly followed him to shut the gate of the yard after him. Hardly had she opened it when she was seized by two men waiting there, who tied her hands and feet, gagged her, and placed her on a horse before the Captain, all then riding away at full speed. Half an hour afterwards Julian was passing Simon's house when he heard poor Tia Ana's groans, and the voices of the neighbours who were talking about Agueda's disappearance. Julian went home, where he chanced to meet the innkeeper, and said to him in an agitated yet firm tone:

"Let me have your mare, and mount the horse yourself while I get arms."

"Where are we going?" asked "mi niño."

"To Porsuna, to seek the road to Benaocaz; these rascals are on their way to Portugal."

So saying, Julian started at full speed, followed by "mi niño."

Hardly had the fugitives gone a league, when they heard the gallop of horses behind them.

"We are lost, it is the guard," said the Captain.

"Hurry your horse," said the others, perceiving

that the horses in pursuit, better than their own, were gaining rapidly upon them.

"Captain, release that girl, who impedes your flight," said one of the men; "in either case you must lose her, so you may as well secure your own liberty, at all events."

The pursuers approached still nearer, and the Captain, placing Agueda by the side of the road, quickened his pace, his companions having already done so. Seeing herself free, Agueda succeeded by a violent effort in releasing one of her hands, with which she removed the handkerchief from her mouth, and cried out, "Help!" at the very moment the horsemen came up. But it was no guard that came near to aid her; it was Julian.

Surprised at the disturbance he heard, the Alcalde went from his house to the scene of Agueda's return, and was not particularly pleased to see in his son the heroic rescuer of Simon Verde's daughter, and in his panting and fatigued horse the victim of the chivalrous adventure.

The first person he happened to meet was "mi niño," whom he attacked, saying, "Who gave you authority, you rogue and scoundrel, to take my horse out of the stable to carry your enormous weight?"

"I told him to take it, father," said Julian in a respectful tone.

"I have something to say to you," replied his father; "you had better take the horses home."

Julian obeyed.

"Leave my presence, or I may serve you as you have served my horse," continued the Alcalde, turning to "mi niño." "The girl ought to be ashamed of her conduct; and the man who concealed her admirer shall be taken to prison," said the Alcalde.

Deep silence succeeded to the moving scene that had touched so many kindly hearts with joy and sympathy. Lights were put out and doors closed; darkness, solitude, and silence replaced that one bright moment of rejoicing in the happiness of another.

CHAPTER VII.

More than a year had passed. It was a damp, cloudy morning of December, windy and rainy, as if the day were giving vent to its ill humour. It tinged with sadness the landscape, silenced the birds, and bowed the heads of the flowers that brighten the country in Andalusia, even in winter. The river flowed turbid and swollen by the currents rushing into it. A flight of crows cawed overhead. It was, in short, one of those days when the rich can most fully enjoy the comforts of their own fireside, and the poor feel most cruelly their chilly destitution.

Along the road by the riverside, leading from Triana to Gelves, a man was walking slowly and sadly. His face bore the deep furrows that outwardly mark man's sufferings; his hair was white,

and his expression, though good and kind, was so sorrowful, that it was touching beyond words. This man was Simon Verde, just released after a year's imprisonment. Simon knew what he should find at home: a daughter dishonoured by calumny, and a mother slowly but surely dying, already blinded by weeping, both dependent upon the small but never-failing charity of the poor. Upon the first painful meeting of this unfortunate family, it was the woman who sustained the courage of the man.

"Simon, my son," said the poor blind mother, "do not be discouraged. You once said that a good conscience was a soft bed, and it is true. Therefore, do not be disheartened; remember your own good words."

"When I said that, mother, and felt strong against misfortune, we had the best possessions of the poor —health and reputation. My darling child has lost both, and you, my mother, your eyes from weeping, and all by my fault!"

"It is through no fault of yours, my son. What has happened has been God's will, and in believing this you will find comfort and resignation."

"Mother, I am resigned, but I must feel and weep. Let me mourn for the daughter who has suffered so much." Simon cried bitterly, as he looked from the mother who could not see him, yet lavished heart-felt words of consolation upon him as she did caresses when he was a child, to his daughter, who, pale and

delicate, tried to smile at him as she had always done.

"That perverse, wicked Alcalde!" said a neighbour, whose tears showed her deep compassion, "God has already judged him, Simon, for if he shut you up in a prison, he has had a cancer in his face for the last year, from which he can never recover. It is a judgment of God. You have come out of your prison on foot, but he will never walk out of his alive; and serve him right, Simon."

"His trouble won't cure mine, Beatriz. God forbid I should wish harm to my greatest enemy."

"Well said, Simon," added his mother. "We lose the fruit of our tribulation if it make us uncharitable to those who have done us evil."

Approaching Agueda, so as only to be heard by her, Beatriz said, "When this bad man is gone, you can marry Julian, and all will be made right."

"I?" exclaimed Agueda, her pale face suddenly flushing; "I marry Julian after all that has been said of me? Pray do not think so, Tia Beatriz! Julian is much too good for that. When I was only poor and he rich, I thought myself as good as he. But now that I am dishonoured by his father's false testimony, no man could marry me without lowering himself. And I would not allow any one to suffer through me."

"Come, Aguedilla, with all your pretended humility this is pure pride, my child. Don't you see that his marrying you would set all to rights?"

"No one can set all to rights but the man who did the wrong, Tia Beatriz. It is not in Julian's power to restore my good name, though I might injure his."

Agueda felt this so deeply, that since the Alcalde had openly humiliated her, she had broken off all relations with Julian, and refused to accede to his entreaties to be allowed to see her. When the unhappy girl heard his voice singing as he passed her balcony to attract her attention, Agueda wept bitterly, but the window remained closed. Julian was in despair at this decided repulse, but at last attained his object.

One day "Mi Niño" entered Simon's house, where he was always welcome since he had assisted in the rescue of Agueda, under a pretext as clumsy as himself, and said to her in a loud whisper; "Agueda, Julian told me to tell you that you are behaving very badly to him."

"Tell him that his father has not restored to me my lost reputation," replied Agueda to this Mercury.

"Pray, can Julian help his father's bad language and wicked ways? He hates me since I lamed his horse for him, but I don't care that for him!" replied "Mi Niño," snapping his big fingers at him.

"He can't help it, I know," answered the poor girl, with tears in her black eyes and a bitter smile on her pale lips. "But tell him that my bridal bed will be the cold earth."

"Maria Santisima! how melancholy you are!

He can't do more than marry you; no one can say a word against you *then.*"

"It cannot be, Joaquin; you cannot destroy the cobweb without killing the spider."

"He will be miserable, Agueda."

"And so shall I," answered the poor girl.

"I assure you he does not forget you," said "Mi Niño," giving a great thump on his ample chest.

"I believe it," said Agueda; "but remembrance is buried in the Campo-Santo."

"But you are not going to die?" said "Mi Niño," looking at her fixedly, and adding, with country frankness, "you certainly do look ill; still Julian will marry no one but you; and if you were to die, his father would not soon hear the last of it, as you would see!"

"I shall not see it," answered Agueda. "God alone can raise the dead; tell Julian this from me."

"I am going," said "Mi Niño," "not to hear any more of this. I am no lawyer, Agueda, though Julian leaves me to plead his cause. I only give you one word of advice. Don't be so scrupulous, and go to the balcony. There you can come to an understanding, and Julian will leave me in peace. *Á Dios!*" "Mi Niño" was going away when he turned back, and said, "I forgot to tell you that Julian asks you to give him the carnation."

"Tell him," answered Agueda, concealing one in her bosom, "that there are no carnations in January; the frost kills them."

Hardly had Joaquin departed when Agueda threw herself, choked with sobs, upon her bed. This continued and heroic effort to combat her love, her father's long imprisonment, her good grandmother's blindness, the poverty into which they had fallen, which compelled them to live upon charity, had completely crushed and broken this tender, delicate spirit.

The home of the late Alcalde was far from a happy one. Besides his terrible physical suffering, he had alienated by his conduct the affection of his only son, who, although he did not fail in outward respect and obedience to his father, was absolutely estranged from him in feelings. So much misery do men bring upon themselves in this life!

CHAPTER VIII.

SIMON had had the grief of seeing his poor ass die of ill treatment after being a second time sold. What would he not have given for the means of saving her from suffering when he met her, lame, emaciated, covered with wounds, and bending under heavy loads!

At that time Simon made his journeys to Seville on foot, and, as may be supposed, his earnings were very small. One night he had come in more tired than ever, for it had been raining, and the road was heavy

and muddy. He felt quite exhausted in his wet clothes, having no others to put on.

"Agueda, how do you feel?" said he to his daughter, who was leaning on her grandmother's shoulder.

"Very well, father," replied Agueda, smiling, though the dimples that once lent grace and youthful charm to her face were no longer visible in her thin cheeks.

"Have you had anything to eat?" asked Simon of his mother. She did not answer. They had eaten nothing that day.

"I was not hungry," answered Agueda when her father repeated the question.

"My child," said Simon, restraining his tears with difficulty, "I passed a confectioner's, and wished to bring you a few biscuits just baked, at four cuartos the half-quarter, but I hadn't enough. I have only earned two reals to-day, which are barely sufficient for half a loaf of bread, oil, and charcoal to make a meal."

At that moment the church bell was heard to ring for the passing of the Sacred Host. Simon rose and uncovered his head. His mother recited the paternoster, adding at the end, "In mercy receive the soul that desires Thee."

"To whom goes His sacred Majesty?" asked Simon when the prayer was over.

"To the Alcalde, who has become much worse."

"If I had a cloak I would accompany His sacred

Majesty, although I am neither friend nor relation of the Alcalde's," remarked the good Christian.

"Go all the same, my son," replied his good mother; "because it is a man who has done us so much harm. You can take to this solemn rite the devotion and reverence that may make your outward appearance acceptable to the Lord, who sees all hearts, and will read the pardon you thus openly bring to your enemy, whom may God forgive!"

"I am very tired, mother—my wet clothes are very heavy, and it is pouring with rain. But I will go."

Simon went to the church, took a torch, and accompanied the Sacred Host to the sick man's house. At the conclusion of the holy rite, the Priest said, "I sent a message to your house, Simon, for you to come, as the dying man wishes to see you."

"Me?" exclaimed Simon.

"Yes, you. Let Miguel take away your torch, and come in at once. There is no time to be lost."

Simon entered the patient's room, where many people were assembled. Deep was his horror to see the man, hitherto so strong and well, reduced by suffering to a skeleton, his cancered face enveloped in bandages, weak, hopelessly dying, yet with an immortal soul! As soon as he saw Simon he extended to him his emaciated arms, exclaiming in a heartrending tone, "Forgive me, Simon!"

Striking was the impression produced upon all present by the dying man's entreaty for pardon.

Repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation are the holiest fruits of the Gospel, the glorious triumph of Christian humility over anti-Christian pride, and bring to the Christian's dying bed a spark of light from heaven. This cry went to the very heart of the dying man's son, who until then had sat silently and mournfully by his side. Julian, at once seizing his father's hand and kissing it reverently, tearfully exclaimed, "My father!"

"Señor Alcalde, I have forgotten the past," said Simon, much moved.

"Let me speak, Simon; I have done you so much injury! Death opens the eyes of those souls whom God has not for ever forsaken, and the Divine Majesty has left me time to atone in part for the wrong I have done. Señores, you are all witnesses"——

"Señor, you break my heart," interrupted Simon, with tears flowing down his cheeks.

"No, Simon, I cannot be silent: I have confessed, and wish to die a Christian. As you are one, do not prevent this. Señores, I calumniated Agueda, an innocent, virtuous girl, that she might not marry my son, because she was poor, out of wicked covetousness! The defamation was public, and I publicly retract it. As for you, Simon"——

"No more, Señor; your honour has done more than your Christian duty," repeated Simon, noting the Alcalde's exhaustion.

"No, Simon. The gate of heaven is closed to the

sinner unless he repents. Let man hear my penitence and pray for me, that God may hear and receive me!"

Tia Ana and Agueda, who had been hastily fetched, now stood near the door, the poor blind woman guided by her invalid grandchild, whom she in turn supported. The repentant man fixed his eyes mournfully upon these three persons so changed by calamity, whom he had not beheld for a year. It added a pang to his last moments to see Simon's white head and shabby wet clothes; the sightless eyes of the good, patient old woman, and the broken, faded look of the once fresh and blooming Agueda.

"But for me, these might all have been happy! And I—the worst sufferer by my sins—have lost peace and rest, am without a friend, or the affection of my only son!" faltered he.

"Do not for heaven's sake say so, father. Forgive me if I have been wanting in duty to you," exclaimed Julian.

"You have not, my dear son; but the heart can distinguish between forced and voluntary affection. If you could not love me during my life, at least remember me with love and follow my last advice—never to bear hatred to any one."

The dying man fell forward insensible into his son's arms. After some time, by the care of those around him, he once more opened his eyes, and faintly murmured, "This is death."

"Meet it in peace, resigned to expiation and trust-

ing to salvation," replied the priest. "Have you anything on your mind?"

The dying man signed to Agueda and his son to approach, wished to join their hands, and as the priest placed them in his failing grasp, he murmured in weak accents, "Be happy, Julian; let Simon be thy father. Pray for me, a sinner; by God's grace—a penitent one!"

EPILOGUE.

A YEAR-AND-A-HALF after the Alcalde's death, time had effaced the sad scenes of the past, and brought many changes in the life of the people of whom we speak.

One Sunday evening the good Tia Ana was sitting in the arbour of Simon Verde's old house. By her side was her grandchild Maricota, a stupid, bouncing girl of about sixteen, who had taken the place of Agueda since her marriage. As she could not count beyond ten, she was at that moment puzzled to answer her grandmother, who was asking the number of oranges, and birds, and chickens, and grandchildren around her.

"Mother, she is more than half out in her reckoning," said Simon Verde, coming in bright and hearty as ever, with an armful of robust vegetables. "Maricota, the growth of your mind does not keep pace with that of your body. Why, you

can't even count! Leave those green oranges alone."

At this moment a young woman entered the arbour, beaming with health and happiness. She wore a smart woollen dress open in front displaying her stiff, showy petticoat. Upon her head she had a pretty, long veil of yellow Manilla crape, flowing almost to her feet; she was well shod, and wore a red carnation in her hair. She carried in her arms a baby only three weeks old, enveloped in clouds of pink and white silk and tulle, and was followed by a good-looking young man, in a rich cloak of blue cloth edged with crimson velvet.

"Agueda, dear, how soon you have come out," said Simon when he saw her.

"This morning I have been to church, father, and I could not come out without bringing my child to my second mother," said Agueda, placing the child in her grandmother's arms. "Here is my daughter, Tia Ana. She is a little angel!"

Her fine eyes sparkled with the sacred joy of a mother, and the dimples in her cheeks were more enchanting than ever.

"She is as heavy as a child three months old," said the poor, blind Ana, adding, "God bless her! What is her name?"

"Ana."

"That is a grandmother's name!"

"Exactly. I hope she will live to have grandchildren who love her as yours do you."

"Julian, why did you let this child come out so soon?" asked Simon.

"Because, father Simon, Agueda always does as she likes," replied Julian.

"Women generally do what they once take into their heads, so one may as well leave them alone," said Simon, adding to Joaquin, who stood outside the arbour, "Mi Niño, why don't you come in?"

"He has a favour to ask, and wants me to help him," replied Julian for "Mi Niño." "He wants Maricota, and as she has no father, he must ask you for her."

"Mi Niño," said Simon, "if I had another daughter I would give her to you, for I like you; but Maricota is still but a child, and you—how old are you?"

"Mi Niño" looked puzzled, and did not reply.

"You are quite capable of not knowing your own age. It is just what I should expect. Don't be offended with me for saying so."

"I will go and ask my mother," said the suitor, retreating.

"Stop. I dare say I know pretty well," said Simon. "You were twenty-four when I first came to grief; Maricota was then seven, and my Agueda thirteen. That was nine years ago; so you are now thirty-three, and Maricota sixteen. You are still young for work, but too old to marry her."

"Mi Niño," who had never thought of his age, was confounded to hear himself called old.

"You should marry a widow; that would suit you best," continued Simon Verde.

A clear, ringing voice from the house exclaimed—

"Why should you answer for the bride he wishes to marry?"

"Then the girl was listening all the time!" exclaimed Simon. "Then she is in love with you too, I suppose. Who would have thought it? They may well say you can never know all the ins and outs of your own house!"

"Father," said Agueda, laughing, "you ought to have found it out, for 'Mi Niño' has been more absent than ever since he has been in love, and she does not know whether she is standing upon her head or her heels."

"I ought to have guessed it," said Simon, laughing too, "for I remember now the extraordinary song I so often heard at night. I little thought it was meant for Maricota. But I must tell you, 'Mi Nino,' she has no money to spend upon clothes, and is not properly provided for a bride!"

"Agueda will look after that. She will be the bride's godmother, and I the bridegroom's godfather!" said Julian.

"Maricota, shall I say yes?" asked Simon.

This time the voice was silent.

"The girl won't answer," said Simon.

"Father," said Agueda gaily, "you are growing old and forget that 'yes' can only be said from a balcony."

"First of all, then, what do you say, mother?" said Simon, turning to her.

"I say that Joaquin is a great favourite of mine, and that an ounce of goodness is worth a hundredweight of talent. I say that they will be well married; yesterday a christening, and to-morrow a wedding! What more can I say, but blessed and praised and honoured be the Lord who does all things well!"

We may add,—Blest and happy are those who pass through the trials of this life guided by the law of Christ, and the rules of His Catholic Church!

NATIONAL PICTURES.

HONOUR BEFORE HONOURS.

CHAPTER I.

THE natural aspect of the Sierra is irregular and striking, its vegetation rich and varied. There monotony and sameness are unknown. The country everywhere asserts its characteristic grandeur, notwithstanding the progressive culture that invades it with plough and oxen, training the growth of its pines, placing bounds to its wild woods and flowing streams, and robbing the cork-trees—those vegetable Saint Bartholomews, martyrs to civilisation—of their bark. Thus, in the most sudden and picturesque manner, is blended cultivated and rustic scenery; plains and rocky hills alternate; here a noble oak,[1] entangled in brambles, is surrounded by its plebeian relations, the delicate leafy dwarf oaks, not far from a clear and limpid stream, that

[1] *Quercus ballota*, the oak of the Sierra, is a native of Atlas, brought to Spain by the Moors.

gallantly bathes the feet of a melancholy willow, whose slender drooping branches hang over its waters, and inhale the slight perfume of the bay laurels, worn by the gay sons of the mountains on gala days; while grey steep barren rocks form a background to green fields of well-cultivated wheat. Paths followed by the traveller lead him amongst high majestic trees intertwined with undergrowth, to wide flowering valleys watered by rippling streams; while a complete chorus of winged creatures sing an epithalamium in tones so varied that he might believe himself wandering in a royal park. Suddenly a path becomes narrow and rough, gradually ending in the arid ascent of a steep isolated hill, surrounded by desolate plains. Similar elevations rise on all sides, as if to annihilate space. Ivy, the freshest, brightest child of this fertile region, forms a bond of union between the varied and opposite productions of nature, clinging lovingly alike to the rocks and trees; to the barren mountains and damp mountain paths; to the solitary bramble and to the habitation of man. It attaches itself to everything with the grace and warmth of youth, and the strength and constancy of later years. It is the busy Martha of its surroundings, ever at work; it spreads a carpet over the bare ground; fills up every vacant corner; throws sculptured garlands over the rocks; shelters the poor suffering ruins, like a sister of charity; lays its green shroud over the tree that was its friend; and

twining itself from tree to tree over the pathway of man, forms a triumphal arch in honour of the king of created things. In short, the mountain ivy, with its rich profusion of tiny leaves and branches, is at once the pride and florid ornament of the Sierra; the bright emerald gem that is not dried up by heat, nor discoloured by rain; that is not withered by the sun, nor dimmed by age.

One morning a group was seen descending a stony path, consisting of three men walking with slow and measured steps, enveloped in their cloaks, which, as on all solemn occasions, hung around them like flowing robes. They were preceded by a mule, upon which was placed a diminutive white coffin covered with flowers. The silence of the three men was only interrupted by the gentle murmur of a rivulet that ran by their side, by the melancholy sigh of the breeze, by the divine and harmonious trill of the nightingale, and by the regular tread of the mule. When they had reached the next town, La Higuera, they proceeded to the Campo-Santo, where, as in our temples, the Church receives us all alike and blesses us. The men opened a hole in the ground, in which they laid the small white coffin containing the little body of the sleeping angel, to whom God had granted rest before fatigue, while the bells of the church near welcomed the child favoured by God. As the first clod of earth fell upon the lid it produced a dull hollow sound, accompanied by a groan from one of the men who

had stood somewhat aside twisting in his hands the hat which he had removed out of respect to the sacred place, where he was leaving behind him the only son who had survived two elder children he had recently lost. A farewell is always sad, but in the Campo-Santo it becomes a solemn reality.

After concluding their task with the respectful decorum always considered due to the dead in Spain, the three men went silently away, the mule being led by the right hand of its owner. At the foot of the hill the eldest of the three men said to the sorrowing father, "Come, Juan, mount him."

Juan shook his head negatively.

"Then if you won't, I will," continued the old man, who was a jovial and loquacious muleteer.

They soon reached the poor little hamlet of Valdeflores, not so pretty as its name, that lies in a plain between two gentle wooded hills. From one of these rises the road to Aracena, and from the other descends that leading to La Higuera.

The house they entered, like the few others forming the hamlet, was built of stone walls without mortar or cement, with thatched roof. The interior formed one vast room, having at one end a hearth for wood fuel, used for cooking and warmth. On both sides of the fireplace there were some corners partitioned off for sleeping rooms and granaries. At the further end there were mangers for cattle, perches for poultry, and fresh straw for the comfort of the animals, in the country such

constant and valuable companions of man, who is so ungrateful to them.

On seeing the men, a lively bustling woman who was watching at the large always open door of the house, exclaimed: "Come in quickly—don't you see it is raining, and you will wet your nice cloaks?"

"It's but a few drops, to lay the dust," replied the muleteer, named Tio Bastian.

"Yes, but each drop brings a bucket of water—don't you see how lowering the sky is?" said the woman. "The food is cooked and will be spoilt, Juan," continued she, turning to the father of the child, who was her cousin, "Estefanía has one good cry after another, like a Rosary of Ave-Marias. Come, man, tell her not to give way so much. It is displeasing to God."

Juan went into the dormitory, Tio Bastian led his mule to the manger, and Maria-Josefa, the woman who had spoken, after taking off and folding the cloak of her husband, the third man, placed a simple meal upon the table, according to custom on these occasions, as a sign of grateful attention to those who honour the living and dead by their presence. This banquet consisted of an *olla* of goat's flesh—not bad in the Sierra—sausage, bacon, and vegetables, with a dish of olives; one of sweet fritters, and a jug of wine.

"At last I have collected you all except Tio Bastian, who prefers the conversation of his mules," said Maria-Josefa, when they were assembled.

"Don't you know, Maria-Josefa, a clever woman like you," said the old man, after seating and crossing himself, "that muleteers are always late? And I will tell you why. One day when the Divine Majesty was giving audience, the priests came, and prayed for a good life, and the Lord granted it them. Next came the friars, and they asked the same gift, but the Lord told them they were too late, this grace had been given to others. They then begged for a good death, and the Lord acceded to this. Then the muleteers came and prayed for a good life. 'You come too late,' said the Master. 'A good death then, Lord?' 'This too has been asked for and conceded,' said the Lord. So the muleteers have neither a good life nor a good death, and are always too late. Estefanía—do eat something. You cannot console yourself upon an empty stomach. If you wept for your sins as you weep for the death of an angel, you would surely be saved," added he, addressing the sad mother.

"My child! who seemed so blooming when he was born! Ah, Tio Bastian, your grandchild, the same age as my boy, is so well that you don't know what it is to have the flower torn from the tree," said the poor mother.

"His guardian angel bore this flower to another garden, where the sun could not wither it, nor frost nip it. If yours had done the same for you when you were an infant, you would not have had so much to pass through, nor have shed so many

tears. I am surprised to see you give way to such violent grief. You are always so meek and submissive," said Tio Bastian.

"It is because the food I gave my boy killed him," cried the poor mother.

"Nonsense, woman!" said Tio Bastian, adding: "Some excuse is always found for death. They say that Death implored the Divine Majesty to release him from his office—he did not wish to fulfil its duties because he would become hated as a tyrant. 'Do not be uneasy—you will always be excused,' said the Eternal Father. And so it is—sometimes it's the food, and another time the doctors. The fact is, that we believe that death cannot enter unless we open the door. Maria-Josefa, don't give me any more pumpkin, it thins the blood. Give me bread, for man is supported by his feet and bread. Juan, I must tell you I spoke to your master to see if he would help you. I said to him, 'Señor Don José, we all need one another. Your honour might well give a helping hand to poor Juan Martin, who is a good man, and a rare worker, for God has sent heavy trials upon his home. His mule died; his wife lately had a dangerous illness; his two elder children died of smallpox, and lastly he has been laid up for three months from having burnt his arm in putting out the fire at your honour's farm.'"

"I have indeed been unlucky," said Juan Martin. "Everything has gone wrong with me. But Job had

more to endure—he had a bad wife. You know, Estefanía, that we every day say in the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done.'"

"But what did Don José reply?" asked Maria-Josefa.

"Nothing. He turned his back upon me. I couldn't stand this quietly, so I exclaimed, 'I verily believe, Señor, that if you were the sun, you wouldn't shine upon anybody!" This touched him up, and turning round he said to me in his hollow voice—'You mean to tell me I am a miser!' 'I don't say your honour is, but that you seem so,' replied I: 'in Portugal I have heard a saying that those who wear wolves' clothing will be taken for wolves.'"

"Still he has money and is a person of consequence," said Juan Martin's brother.

"And what is he?" said Tio Bastian. "I who can count more years than I care to reckon, know who these people are, *parvenus* raised from the dust of the earth. My father—may his soul rest in peace!—knew in his youth this one's grandfather, who came here empty-handed from the mountain. He was lucky, and his pigs multiplied by scores. When his son inherited his money, he married a nobody with a fortune. Then he called himself Don José, and the people nicknamed him Joseph the First, after the French King."

"The refrain says," remarked Maria-Josefa, "that the mountaineers all carry letters of nobility on their heads. Is this true, Tio Bastian?"

"Why not?" replied he. "We have all good blood in our veins, thank God, but we cannot all be rich and noble any more than we can all be healthy or handsome. In this world there will always be poor and rich, and may St. Peter bless what God gives! Even the blocks of wood have their separate uses. One is made into a saint, and another into charcoal! You must know that the Apostles one day asked the Lord's leave to present their children to Him. They brought to Him then the eldest and best-looking, and the Lord saw and bestowed gifts upon them. When the younger and more destitute heard this, they too wished to go, and the Apostles offered their petition to the Lord, but the Lord said, 'No—these remain to serve the others.' And so some of us are born to serve, and others to be served. To return to ourselves (who belong to the destitute children of the Apostles), when the King of Spain came to these mountains, the ignorant people thought that the deepest respect they could show him was to throw themselves prostrate on the ground before him. On seeing this the king laughed and said, 'Get up, *Galgos*' (hounds). But they chose to understand that his majesty had said, 'Rise, *Hidalgos*,' and since then they will have it they are nobles."

"And so this Don José gives himself the airs of an Infante of Spain," exclaimed Maria-Josefa, spitefully; "he pretends to be fine clay, and is coarser

than earthenware of Triana, and sourer than a green medlar, and so niggardly that he would not give to the poorest and neediest, what a beggar gives to his dog, light and shelter."

"Maria-Josefa has some secret grudge against Don José," said the old man to himself, and he was right. Maria-Josefa was indignant with Don José, and the reader will now be told why.

CHAPTER II.

THREE months before, Maria-Josefa, who went to assist sometimes in the house of the consequential Don José Sanchez, had been called by that gentleman into his study. When he had closed the door, he asked her, as she had lately had a baby, if she would like to take charge of a little boy also, at the rate of six *duros* a month. Maria-Josefa, who was strong, and always glad to contribute to her home, at once accepted the proposal, and soon afterwards a man came to her door one dark night, and, without entering, placed in her arms a child, who was, he said, called Gabriel. For three months she kept it, receiving the payment regularly, but a few days previously, upon going to Aracena to claim the money, Don José had refused to give it her, alleging that the funds placed with him for the purpose were exhausted, and not having been renewed, he had nothing more to do with the boy, and she could

carry him to the workhouse, or do what she liked with him. These words raised a storm of conflicting feelings in the mind of Maria-Josefa, who was of a vehement nature, and a painful struggle between her motherly love for the unhappy deserted infant, and a strong sense of her own interest. She had to consider not only the present inconvenience of nursing two children instead of one, but the prospect of a permanent addition to her cares without any remuneration. But, on the other hand, how could she abandon the little angel smiling in her arms? It was at this time that her cousin's baby died, and Maria-Josefa formed the plan she brought forward at the end of the meal at which we left her.

"I can't think why you are so down upon Don José," said Tio Bastian to Maria-Josefa. "Because as you are clever enough to draw water from a dry well, you have a good chance of making him pay well for the child you have charge of."

"This is a complete falsehood," exclaimed Maria-Josefa, "a shameful falsehood! This miser never gave me in his life more than what was agreed upon. May this false testimony recoil upon those who gave it!"

"Gently—what harm is there in it? Your farm goes on growing like rice."

"Yes, growing like a monkey's tail! It's all my management. When I married, my husband was in debt for the wedding expenses, but within a year

I did not owe anything. That you may see how much good I get by the child, I may tell you that I wish to give it up to Estefanía, as I cannot nurse it any longer as well as my little girl, now that they are both bigger, and it would be better for her not to leave off nursing suddenly. What do you say, Juan?"

"Estefanía can do as she pleases," replied he, "but I warn you that the proverb says that 'they who bring up other people's children nourish firebrands.'"

"I consider I am doing you a service," said Maria-Josefa. Then turning to Tio Bastian she continued, "Have *you* no idea whose child this is?"

"How should I know if you don't?"

"*I* don't, indeed. My hints have all been thrown away upon Don José. Nothing could I extract from this cunning old tortoise, who won't come out of his shell."

"Then it will never be known."

"You are mistaken there, Tio Bastian, because the truth will always come to the surface, even if it is hidden in the depths of the earth."

"Ah!" exclaimed Estefanía suddenly, "in my trouble I have forgotten Tio Matías. Maria-Josefa, give me this spoon. It is not every day we have *olla* in my house. Let the poor fellow have his share."

Tio Matías (or Limosna) was an aged invalid, ragged and half-witted, whom Juan Martin and

Estefanía had charitably received into their house when he was ill. There he had remained, and the grateful old man, unable to repay their kindness, showed his good intentions by rendering them any little services he could. His principal work was to sweep with a birch broom the tiled floor, which he did to perfection.

"Take your plate of meat and sausage, Tio Matías," said Estefanía.

"May God repay you, as He will," replied Tio Matías; "what you give you have. The good you do still comes to you."

"Tio Matías," said Estefanía, crying bitterly, "when my boy Juan was living, do you remember how he used to bring you your food when you would not come to the table?"

The poor old man, who passionately loved all children in general and those of his benefactors in particular, wept aloud at these words and exclaimed, "They go while I remain here!"

Estefanía felt all the significance of these words, and answered: "Tio Matías, God knows what He does. Long life is a burden we must bear with patience."

"We all knew Tio Limosna in better days," said Tio Bastian; "how happy and jovial he was! And what a wreck he is! Juan, you never did a deed of nobler charity than in taking him in. Without you what would have become of him? He has met with the extremes of misfortune. His wife died in

giving birth to a boy, just after his discharge as a soldier in the Peninsular war. He carried the child from door to door, and begged food for it. When it was older he took it with him from house to house where he sought alms, and did what he could to amuse the labourers and country people, for he was very clever and popular with them, and they used to invite him to share their food and ask a blessing upon it. His son grew up very bad, and avoided work as the devil does the Cross. So everybody told the father that he as a veteran soldier should always find a spoon at their tables, but that as for his son, who could very well earn his own living, they would not support him in idleness. The father told the boy this, but he did not care. In this world the flies eat those who are made of honey, and Tio Matías had allowed this naughty bird's wings to grow, and when he wanted to clip them he could not. One day they both arrived at a farm at dinner-time, but before entering the father hid his son among some straw, and went in alone. 'God be with you, Tio Limosna,' said the labourers, when they saw him. 'Come and have something to eat, and give the blessing.' So he said, crossing himself, 'In the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit!' 'How is this, Tio Limosna? The Son, why do you leave out the Son?' Tio Matías would then call out, 'Son, son, these gentlemen want you,' and then they all began to laugh, and the son ate with them as usual. However, the father insisting

that the son should work, this *pan-perdido* (bread-waster) ran away without ever being heard of again. Since then poor Tio Matías has broken down completely, for he had set his heart upon this unnatural son whom he had brought up with so much difficulty, and who, when he ought to have maintained his father, had turned his back upon every obligation of love or duty. Well," added Tio Bastian, rising, "God be with you, Juan; I must be going. Good-bye, Estefanía. I am an old dog, and I advise you not to take this child. There are no good children nowadays!"

The jovial old man mounted his mule, which Tio Limosna had brought him, and went away, singing,

"I must die with a song,
For I wept at my birth;
Since not only for me
Are the sorrows of earth."

Meanwhile Maria-Josefa had fetched the child she had been nursing, and placed it in Estefanía's arms. This good woman took it with a sigh, since it reminded her of her boy, whose pretty eyes were closed for ever, whose little mouth no longer fed at his mother's breast, whose cradle was empty, and whose clothes lay neglected upon a wicker-basket, no longer warmed and perfumed by the mother's careful hand with the fragrant and popular rosemary. Estefanía looked at her husband, who was bending over to light a cigar, unwilling to influence his wife's decision. Estefanía understood this, and

pressing the child to her heart, she adopted it as her son.

"Thou hast no mother—I have no child, and we cannot do without one another. My heart needs thee, and thou canst not live without a mother's protecting arms and love to guard thee waking or sleeping. Come to me, thou who but for me must die without consciousness, as thou livest without knowing that thou hast found a mother's heart, the first best treasure of a created being. If our Lord has left thee thus deserted, it is because He knew a woman would have pity upon thy helplessness."

Such, as far as cold words may express them, were the warm feelings of Estefanía clearly to be read in her loving face, her tears, and her affectionate embrace of the child. But although the simple, good Estefanía could not have described her feelings, one who has studied with loving enthusiasm the pure holy lives of the simple Catholic Spanish women of the people, and their virtues as wives and mothers, takes up her pen to do so.

Tio Matías, leaning upon his broom, saw this act of love and charity, and murmured, "Bless you, Estefanía! And you will be blest, for the good you do still comes to you!"

CHAPTER III.

WHO can look without emotion upon an infant asleep, the type of helpless weakness, of a life that begins with a sigh? Air, light, sound, motion alike fatigue its fragile existence. Yet when a child feels itself in the protecting arms of a woman it is soothed, and, yielding to the soft melancholy cradle songs that spring to the lips of its guardian, closes its eyes in sleep. First, its little face, lately disturbed, becomes serene; then its brows become contracted, as if in pain; next its tiny mouth smiles joyously. What does he see in mind or dream that has not yet met his waking sight or sense? We cannot discover this, and when we watch these innocent beings in our arms, we fancy ourselves surrounded by angels hidden to our perception but visible to theirs, who tell them things of another and better world, which will be forgotten when the angels depart with innocence and purity from that soul destined to feel the evil influences of the body to which it is united in life. "Adieu, poor soul, imprisoned in this cell," whisper the angels, and the child's face looks troubled. "Do not forget us when we are gone," the child groans uneasily. "Be faithful to our Father and Creator, and we will soon come again," the child is quieted. "And before His throne we will sing His praises," and the child smiles like an angel! No less moving is the patient,

self-sacrificing love of the mother, whose sacred and constant devotion preserves the life and wellbeing of the frail creature committed to her care. And yet children, the objects of this sublime tenderness, can sometimes despise, and even pierce deeply, the noble, loving heart of a mother, who, most like the blessed Saviour on the cross, will ere the bleeding wounds be healed forgive them.

Some thoughts like these brought tears into the eyes of Tio Matías, as Estefanía, seated on a low chair near the door, held in her arms a little girl not many weeks old, when Gabriel was four years old. By Estefanía's side was a workbox, which she had put down to nurse her child. Opposite to her, Tio Matías was busy making a whistle for Gabriel. The boy, who, without being exactly handsome, was attractive and clever, fixed his intelligent glance upon the old man's work, and the latter, alone in the world, loved this child tenderly with the fatherly love that, rudely shaken by shameful ingratitude, had left its roots in his broken heart. It was a quiet domestic scene. The hens, enjoying the April sun and their recent meal, had made holes for themselves in which they reposed. Those who had chickens gathered them under their wings, and the cock, grave and dignified, guarded his family with vigilant eye and head erect. The dog slept comfortably, like a soldier in time of peace; and the cat had settled herself upon the shirt Estefanía was making, with great complacency. Even the swallows,

those friends of peaceful happy homes, who loved to build there, ceased their twittering to work at their nests. The only sounds heard were the simmering of the *olla* on the hearth, and the chewing of the mule in the manger, when the voice of Estefanía rose sweet and clear, singing the soft, sad chant of the Nana :—

"Children who sleep are blest of God,
Mothers who watch are watched of God!
In my arms I hold thee, my boy—
If I die, who will then give you joy?
The Virgin her blessed Son prayed
All sinners on earth to forgive;
At the gate of heaven displayed,
Little angels, though poor, ever live."

Meanwhile Tio Matías had finished the whistle, and Gabriel, delighted, ran up to his mother whistling and singing.

"Be quiet; don't you see you are waking your little sister?" said Estefanía.

In fact the baby woke, and raising her pretty face quickly to her brother, began to smile radiantly and held out her little hands to Gabriel, who, coming to her, put his arms round her neck and kissed her.

"How fond they are of each other! they are like brother and sister," remarked Tio Matías.

"And so they are," replied Estefanía, who quite believed it.

"God bless you, Estefanía," said Tio Bastian at the door. "Is Juan at home?"

"No; but he soon will be—sit down and rest," replied Estefanía.

"I am in a hurry, for my mules are gone on in charge of Andres, my grandson, who is only nine years old, and such a rogue. Your children look well. My darling godchild, God bless her, does me credit."

"So she does, but you cannot have said the *Credo* properly when she was baptized, for I never saw a child catch so many illnesses."

"All children catch things. Well, have you had anything from Don José yet?"

"What do you expect him to give me? Was there ever such a mean wretch? Our troubles are over, now, thank God; we want for nothing; since we inherited the bit of land from my uncle here, and the house in Aracena, we are free from anxiety."

"That is no affair of his. Come, here is Juan. I am glad to see him before I go away." After greeting him, Tio Bastian said, "How lucky you are to live on your own freehold. I only wish I did, but my land belongs to a strip of poor land lying near the town which belonged to the monks and to the Marquis del Zabuco. In past years the poor begged to have it, the friars and the marquis agreed to give it, and it was divided into plots of ground taxed with a small tribute. The poor worked and toiled at it, but years and years passed and they never were able to pay the tribute. Still neither the monks nor the marquises exacted the

tax, because they saw that the unfortunates could not pay it; and in former days, Juan, there was charity in the world! But when the new law came, the fathers were deprived of their property, and it was sold for a mere nothing. Don José I.—that greedy dog, who gnaws at every bone—bought the friars' land, and as by the new law it was divided, the Aracena property fell to a *Pan-perdido*, who had married a daughter of the marquis, and ran through his fortune, so Don José bought that too for a morsel of bread. Then this shameless robber demanded of the unhappy tenants not only the current taxes, but all past arrears! It is heartrending to see the despair of these poor people weeping for their fathers and the marquis. Almost all have had to give up possession of the land which they and their forefathers had in vain endeavoured to render fruitful by their hard labour. They say this wicked Don José has been to Madrid, and actually brought back a cross (order)!"

"Many have come to the gallows for less than he has done," replied Juan. "His house has convent pictures in it, and his wife openly wears the holy Virgin's jewels!"

"Now, I must go, Juan. Good-bye, Estefanía, *á Dios!* Tio Matías, good-day," said the active old man, as he went away with hasty step.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVENTEEN years passed unheeded by the inhabitants of the village of Valdeflores. Gabriel had become a man, not remarkable in appearance, but his face expressed a quiet determination and dignified goodness that attracted interest and affection, and repelled rudeness or jesting. He had thus been able to silence from his earliest youth the insulting and humiliating conjectures about his origin indulged in by his play-fellows, with that inconceivable cruelty of childhood which would prove that the ferocious instinct of cruelty is inherent in our nature, and should be repressed in children whenever it asserts itself. The epithet of *foundling*, which Gabriel had heard applied to himself, had offended his noble nature, trained in the severe and inflexible laws kept by the people of Spain (and inspired by their religious feelings and chivalrous impulses), by Juan Martin, the perfect type of a high-minded, honourable man. The character of Gabriel had also acquired a tinge of sadness, which made him pensive and reserved; but this very feeling, added to the refined and vigorous quality of his mind, made him attach himself with his whole heart to the excellent family who had so freely bestowed upon him what his own parents had denied to him. One sentiment only was comparable to what he felt for his adored, adopted parents, his

excessive love for Ana, the sweet, gentle daughter of Estefanía, who in return loved Gabriel with the tender constancy of her truly feminine disposition. Juan Martin and Estefanía had given one more strong proof of their affection for Gabriel by selling the house they had inherited in the town, to free him from service as a soldier. Now they had only the field left, and Gabriel worked at it as earnestly as if he wished to repay the sacrifices made for him by his diligent industry. Estefanía, whose quiet life and amiable character preserved her from strong emotions and excitement, was still beautiful, the placid, amiable expression of her face more than replacing the freshness of her youth. Juan Martin was one of the consistent steady men who choose the right path early and follow it to the end. Tio Matías scarcely looked older for the years that had passed, his sorrows and miseries having aged him before his time. The poor dog had died of old age, much wept for by Gabriel and Ana, who had buried it. But the cat was living, and at her advanced age continued to bring into the world every year a scion of her persecuted race. Thus the life of these good happy beings passed quietly; but a few days before, the harmony and peace of the dwelling had been disturbed in Estefanía's mind by her cousin, Maria-Josefa, a meddling busybody, who had assured her that Ana and Gabriel were in love with each other, had always been so, and would remain so.

"Well, what harm would there be in that?" said the good Estafanía.

Maria-Josefa looked at her seriously, and replied: "Are you mad, Estefanía, or only jesting? Is it likely that Juan Martin would allow his daughter to marry a foundling, even if you were bold enough to ask him?"

"But Gabriel is so good," replied Estefanía; "he is an excellent worker, who supported us all when Juan had the scarlet fever. Why should we refuse him? It would be very unjust."

"I have not patience to listen to you," said Maria-Josefa. "Have you not done enough for him? Can he ever repay his obligations to you?"

The poor mother had remained so sad and disheartened after this interview that she passed several sleepless nights, praying to God to bring things to a happy result, as they were beyond her own power. She did not wish to speak to her husband about it, for her gentle, timid nature shrank from taking the initiative.

On the morning of St. John's Eve Tio Bastian came to the house. Estefanía was alone.

"God bless you, daughter," said he.

"And you, Tio Bastian. How are you?"

"I have had a pain in my arm nearly related to the one I had last year in my leg. It is a warning of *the event*. But it may come when it likes—I fear it not with a Father at my bedside. But on the whole I am very well, at present. And Ana?"

"She has gone to gather flowers in the fields with the other girls of the village."

In the Sierra of Aracena the young girls gather wild flowers on St. John's Eve to make decoctions, with which they wash themselves—not for *beauty*, but for *health* in the coming year. This graceful tradition of the people is at least more sensible and innocent than the more coquettish custom of seeking beauty in the flowers.

"And Juan Martin?" continued Tio Bastian.

"In the field with Gabriel," replied Estefanía.

"What I have to say I wished to say to you both," said Tio Bastian, "but as I am growing older every day, and can't run about as much as I once could, I don't want to make a second journey, so I will ask you to tell him about it. I come wholly and solely to ask you for your Ana for my grandson Andres, who is one of the best of boys, as you know. He is provided for, without working for others. When I go my way, all I have will be his. My Andres is a good match, and I plead his suit with much pleasure to a daughter of yours, Estefanía, for they always say, 'Choose a stuff by the texture, and a daughter by the mother.'"

On hearing Tio Bastian's proposal, Estefanía felt the storm at hand, and, startled, could only answer—

"Do you know, Tio Bastian, if the young people love one another?"

"Don't I tell you I come because Andres begged me to do so for him?"

"But—Ana?"

"If the other sent me to ask her, he cannot be afraid of a 'No.'"

"I fear it, Tio Bastian!"

"Then is Ana in love?"

"I am not sure, but I have had some suspicion of it for several days."

"But who is it?"

"I think it may be Gabriel."

"Maria Santisima! A foundling?"

"If she loves him, Tio Bastian, what does it matter? Do you think I should not have loved my Juan all the same if he had been one?"

"Your father would not have allowed you to marry one, that you might not have children without a grandfather. Nor will Juan Martin allow it."

"This is my trouble!" exclaimed the good affectionate mother.

"Your trouble indeed!" said Tio Bastian impatiently.

"But, Señor, can I see my children unhappy and not suffer with them? There is not a boy like Gabriel in the world."

"I have nothing to say against him," replied the muleteer. "Gabriel is considered a steady, clever boy, well brought up by Juan. He is fit for anything but to be your daughter's husband, for in questions of relationship good blood and pure ranks first. So Juan will tell you, who is punctilious. Women never are. You encourage this love, and

you would let the fat fowls eat up your harvest rather than say a word to them."

Estefanía was silent, for at that moment Ana appeared at the door, holding up in one hand her apron full of flowers. She was charming. Nature had showered her perfections upon this simple village girl, and one knew not whether most to admire her elegant figure, her delicately formed features, or the modest, childish grace of her every movement.

Tio Bastian's annoyance vanished on seeing her, and as she approached he said gallantly—

"If I were but twenty instead of seventy, no one but my father's son should carry off this rose-bud. She looks like a princess, has the figure of a *Catalana*, the walk of an *Aragonesa*, and the face of a *Serrana!*"

"You are pleased to mock this poor village girl," said Ana, smiling.

"Village girl, indeed! I am not the only one who admires you, for I come to plead for an excellent lover, a man among men—tall, strong, and enduring. He may not be exactly handsome, but what of that?"

At these words poor Ana grew pale, rosy as she had been a moment before, and the gentle smile fled from her lips. Her lovely eyes turned anxiously to her mother, who said—

"Tio Bastian, you ought not to talk to girls themselves about marrying them, but to their

fathers. Don't you see how you have shocked her?"

"A girl shocked because a lover is proposed to her? Come, Estefanía, you are growing old, and forget your own girlhood. Let us come to the point, Ana—do you love my Andres, who is of good antecedents, who esteems you beyond anything, and will keep you like a saint in his niche?"

Ana lowered her eyes, which were filling with tears.

"Tio Bastian, why do you torture her like St. Lawrence? Don't you see she does not love him?" said Estefanía, coming to her daughter's aid.

"We must all manage our affairs as we best can," replied the muleteer. "Before saying No to my grandson, I should like to be able to say, Take her. Ana, what do you say?"

Ana remained as silent and resistless as the sweet fresh flowers in her apron.

"I should hardly think that the daughter of good parents, carefully brought up, would give her well-born parents the grief of seeing her reject one of the principal youths of the province, and wish to marry a foundling! It would be a disgrace to you!" said the muleteer, with uncontrollable severity.

At this harsh and cruel reproof, Ana, who had never had an unkind word addressed to her before, felt herself so deeply wounded and humiliated, that she raised both hands to her face, and allowed her flowers to fall neglected around her.

Estefanía hastened to her daughter, and indignantly exclaimed:

"Tio Bastian! What right have you to insult my child and break her heart, because she does not wish to marry your grandson? It would be more dishonourable for her to marry him for what he has, without caring for him, and forsake one she does love, unfortunate as he may be. Ana, my love, do not cry!"

The good mother mingled her tears with her daughter's, as she embraced her; and Tio Bastian, who was greatly attached to both, felt penitent and sorry for the effect of his brusque attack upon a girl, and said:

"Come, don't cry, *Niña*. Think no more of my words. Forget what I have said, and do as you please. I cannot deny that my Andres was not as clever as I thought him, for why did he cruelly send me if he had not first come to an understanding with you? You are right to have nothing to say to him. There—don't cry. What more do you want? Shall I ask your father to let you marry Gabriel? Let us make peace, Ana, Estefanía. Your affairs are in good hands with me, for if I can't get your father to agree to what you want, nobody can! Poor Andres is the one to be pitied!"

CHAPTER V.

TIO BASTIAN, with the zeal of the repentant, prepared to fulfil his promise as soon as Juan Martin came home. Estefanía had taken her agitated daughter into the dormitory, and Gabriel was tending the mules, so Juan Martin and the muleteer were alone.

"Juan, don't you think you would do well to marry your children?" began Tio Bastian.

"What do you mean by asking me such a question, when you know the thing cannot be," replied Juan.

"Why not? It is clear as day. Have you any other reason than that Gabriel's origin is unknown to you?"

"I should think that was quite enough!"

"I suppose, as you are somebody yourself, you expect a Don at least for your son-in-law. But in these days, Dons set a high value upon themselves —Don José, for instance!"

"Tio Bastian, you are not quite straightforward. You know that Juan Martin is no fool, and that he has inherited good blood, and wishes to uphold it, and you cannot honestly deny that I am right."

"That may be, but let me tell you, Juan, that you won't easily find a better son-in-law than Gabriel."

"In grafting, one does not consider the branches only, but the tree."

"In point of fact, man, the children are in love with each other, and who can help that?"

"Are you dreaming this?"

"It is even as I say, and if you refuse to allow them to marry, they will either be unhappy or led to disobey you."

"No, Tio Bastian, neither Gabriel nor Ana will ever oppose my paternal authority. They have been trained to know that all obey God in heaven, the king on earth, and the father at home."

"This is pure despotism, man, quite out of date," said the sly old man; "if you persist in not accepting Gabriel, who is so beloved, your family will all rebel, and you will be like the rabbit, fair game to everybody."

"Tio Bastian, those who plough straight never go backwards, and no one will trample upon my bones while I live."

"Juan, you set too high a value upon your good blood and your name! Who will ever know whether your great-grandchildren knew who their grandfather was?"

"To say nothing of baptism, do you mean to tell me a man is worse off than animals of good breed, whose descent is recorded?"

"Then you are determined to make these poor children miserable. If you want a horse without a spot, you may go on foot. Come, man. Think better of it and say yes."

"Tio Bastian, I shall no more go from my

word than the Lord from His cross," replied Juan solemnly.

"Then *con Dios*, Juan! you send me away very wretched," said the muleteer, rising impatiently. "You think yourself as infallible as the Holy Father, but you are as obstinate as my mule *Zancarrón!*"

Before he went away, Tio Bastian said to Estefanía; "Never was there a more unlucky match-maker than myself. Ana, your father is inflexible. No one could have said more to him than I did, but he will not give in."

Ana began to cry.

"We cannot help it, dear. Things in this world never come as we would have them," said Tio Bastian as he went away.

Gabriel soon saw that Ana had been crying.

This was such a new strange occurrence in the quiet life of this family, that he felt his heart oppressed by an anxious presentiment. Nevertheless, when he had regained the house, he slipped out silently and noiselessly to talk at the window with his sweetheart, and she, with the delicacy of love that feels more for the sorrows of the loved one than for its own, accounted for her tears and distress by telling him only of Tio Bastian's proposal, which being agreeable to her parents would at least cause her annoyance.

"Your parents wish you to marry Andres?" said Gabriel.

"And I don't wish it, and they will be vexed. This is what grieves me," she replied.

"Then they will not let you marry me?"

"We must wait for that."

"What will become of us then?" said Gabriel, disconsolately.

"Let us remain together," replied Ana.

"Must I then be the cross that thy life must bear and suffer?"

"To suffer for love is not to suffer, Gabriel."

"My poor Ana!"

"The flower is not poor when it is not separated from the sun that gives it life."

"Ana, if they try to take you from this poor unknown stranger, will they succeed? or will you be constant to him?"

"As long as you are constant to me, or longer. It is my fate to love you. And you, Gabriel, will your love be enduring?"

"Ana, the sea has tides, the moon phases, and the wind changes; but my love is as deep as the sea, without its tides; sad and distant as the moon, without its phases; pure and persistent as the wind, without its changes."

This conversation completely disheartened Gabriel, and made him reflect upon his position, circumstances, and duties. Never in his involuntary love for Ana had the crushing idea occurred to him that a poor foundling neither could nor ought to offer himself as Ana's husband. He felt acute remorse

at the thought of having so imprudently united Ana's fate to his own, with the reserved yet deep and exclusive affection that fills the life of simple young country people, far more completely than is the case in the cultivated and populous centres of civilisation, where corrupt influences too often degrade and lower the tone of morality in love.

The result of Gabriel's painful reflections was the desire of discovering his origin, and knowing that Don José Sanchez could enlighten him on this point, he determined to go and see him in person, and endeavour, as the one most interested, to inspire this harsh and indifferent arbiter of his destiny with more confidence towards him than others had yet been able to secure. The following Sunday, therefore, he dressed himself in his best clothes and walked to Aracena. Before introducing Gabriel to Don José Sanchez, we owe the reader some description of this externally and mentally vulgar man. His figure was square, rough, and ungainly; and he had a broad, sallow, brown face, of unamiable expression. His hair was scanty, short, and greyish, with strongly marked eyebrows, from beneath which peered forth dull inexpressive eyes. Don José, who had not spirit enough to display his pride openly, aired it in coarse jests and premeditated rudeness. He was humble even to servility with the great and powerful, and treated his dependants and inferiors with irritating haughtiness and cruel contempt.

CHAPTER VI.

DON JOSÉ was in his study, to which Gabriel was directed. When he entered he saw a poor old gardener near the door, who was saying to the local magnate—

"Señor Alcalde, I and the other holders of market gardens around this rainy *vallellano* are ruined."

"What affair is that of mine?" replied the grandee.

"As the gardens are close to the Propios land, which was formerly common property, and is now preserved by your honour's son and the other young gentlemen of the town for sporting purposes, they are so overrun with rabbits that everything we sow is eaten up by them, and we are all absolutely ruined."

"Come to the point. What do you want?"

"Señor, is it right that we should throw away our time and our labour only to fatten rabbits for the young gentlemen?—that our wives and children should die for their amusement? For the sake of Maria Santisima, Señor Alcalde, ask the *señoritos* to shoot the rabbits or let others shoot them."

"I daresay!" replied Don José haughtily, and turning his back upon the poor man, he added—"If the rabbits annoy you, muzzle them."

The poor gardener went away in despair, exclaim-

ing, "This land was once a blessing to the people, now it is their ruin."

Don José, absorbed in his accounts, was sitting at his writing table making his calculations, without noticing Gabriel's presence.

"Señor Don José," said he.

"What do you want?" said that worthy, without raising his head. "I have no time to waste. I do not give or receive, so tell me your business quickly."

Gabriel had the Spanish dignity that is not easily intimidated by impertinence, and calmly answered—

"Señor, the sooner you give me satisfaction the sooner you will get rid of me. Rather more than twenty-two years ago you placed a boy in the charge of Maria-Josefa Moreno."

"Well, do you come to tell me of his death? He would be no great loss."

Gabriel, suppressing with difficulty a movement of indignation, replied, in the same tone as before—

"No, Señor, he is not dead. The child has become a man, and is in your presence."

Don José, who until then had almost turned his back upon his visitor, changed his position to look at Gabriel fixedly for a few minutes, without showing any sign of interest in him. Then taking up his pen to write, he coolly said, "Well?"

"I come to ask you who are my parents," continued Gabriel.

"I don't know," replied Don José, with the deliberate intention of giving him pain.

"You do not know?" inquired Gabriel, disconsolately.

"I do not know," repeated the hard-hearted rich man, who intended to persist in the criminal falsehood he had hastily uttered.

"I can hardly believe that," murmured Gabriel inaudibly; adding in a broken voice, "You paid the first few months of my maintenance; you must, then, have had some interest in me."

"Unfortunately I received you when you were left at my door, and charitably paid four months' board for you, and I think I have done enough for you. I don't intend to do any more."

"I do not come to ask you to keep me," replied Gabriel proudly. "I can work, and need not your alms. I come to implore you by all that is sacred to give me some clue to my origin."

"Nobody can give what he has not got. Now leave me in peace," said Don José impatiently; adding pompously and sententiously, "Be an honest man, a zealous defender of the sacred rights of your people and country, and you will be the son of your own deeds. Whether you are the son of a hangman or a duke, a mulatto or a grandee, what does it matter?"

Gabriel at this cruel derision went out without taking leave, slamming the door after him violently.

"The irreverent dog!" said Don José, with a grimace.

Gabriel returned home full of thoughts and plans.

"No, I will not be guilty of base ingratitude to my generous benefactors," said he to himself. "I will become a soldier, for in this calling a brave man has some prospect before him whatever happens."

But this resolution broke down before Ana's acute sorrow when he told her of it.

"Gabriel," said she, "if you go I shall not live long. How can you wish to go away if you love me? Not words but deeds prove love."

"Ana, man is bound by one thing stronger than love—duty!" replied Gabriel.

"Your duty is to look at me," said Ana.

Gabriel passed several days in this terrible struggle, always excusing his father when Ana complained of his severity, until he fell into a state of deep depression, seeing no hope before him.

Doubtless the passions of the mind have greater force among uncultivated than among cultivated people, whether it be that their feelings, although less defined, are deeper, or that they want the distractions to be found in the world. The penetrating eye of a mother's love saw with anguish the slowly-breaking heart of poor Gabriel. One *fête*-day the family were assembled at table. Gabriel had eaten nothing, and Estefanía was looking at her son's pale face with eyes filled with tears, when

suddenly and hastily Don José Sanchez appeared, with a fierce dog as advance, and a meek *alguazil* as rear-guard.

"Your honour here?" said Juan Martin, quietly going forward to meet him.

"Where—where is the boy I placed with you?" replied Don José, panting for breath. "Where is the child of my best and dearest friend?"

Juan Martin moved aside that Don José might see Gabriel, who, leaning against a post supporting the roof, looked disdainfully at the excited man. The cold yet modest dignity of Gabriel somewhat quieted his father's friend, who exclaimed,—

"Son, I was compelled by circumstances to remain a stranger to you, not to awaken suspicion, but I have never lost sight of you—I have always felt the greatest interest in you, though I was afraid to show it."

"And you certainly did not," said Gabriel with a bitter smile. "But tell me at once—who is my father? who is my mother?"

"Your father is General Labrador, who has just announced to me his arrival in Madrid."

"And my mother?"

"The poor lady died when you were born. Your father, who was compromised in a political affair, had to fly from Seville, and his excellent wife would not leave him. In passing this place on the flight into Portugal, they stopped at a farm where you were born, and your mother died. Not being able

to take you with him, your father left you to my care, asking me to watch over you, which I have done with the required secresy. I never heard of him again, and believed him dead, when his letter came, to my great joy. He charges me to send you to him immediately. Depart then, that he may see I have fulfilled my trust, and that, thanks to me, he has a fine son."

The effect produced by these words was not altogether of pleasure or of pain.

"He shall go. I lose him, but God will be with him, he will be happy," thought the noble-minded Juan Martin, unheeding the usurping claims of the man who had so shamefully abandoned the supposed orphan.

Estefanía thought tearfully to herself from the first announcement,—"He will leave me, and forget my poor girl! Why this greatness?"

Ana's loving heart only comprehended and defined one idea, his absence! She had gone away silently and thrown herself sobbing upon her bed.

Gabriel alone, though composed and self-controlled, was entirely happy.

"My dear Gabriel," continued Don José, "everything is arranged for your departure to-morrow. Tell your father that I have placed my servants and mules at your disposal. He will see that I have lost no time in carrying out his orders."

Soon afterwards, seeing that all were too much agitated to pay due respect to his important

presence, Don José retired with his fierce dog and his meek *alguazil.*

Gabriel's father was really an old friend of Don José's, and they had been guilty of many follies in each other's company in their youth. When the former, compromised by a rising against government in Seville, had to fly to Portugal, he took refuge in a farm of Don José's, where, as has been said, his son was born and his wife died. The fugitive left the child in his friend's charge, and with a small sum of money continued his flight. The rich miser having spent the amount left in his hands, as we have seen, completely deserted his friend's child, who was adopted as a nameless foundling by the infinite Christian charity of the poor. More than twenty years had passed, and Don José had lost all recollection of the friend of his youth, when he received a letter from him announcing his arrival in Madrid. This friend, who shone more as a speaker than a writer, did not give much account of himself, only remarking that having distinguished himself somewhere in America, he had returned from that land of exile and adventurers with the rank of General, which was doubtful, and a capital in the bank, which was positive. He added that he hoped his son's education had been cared for, that he should find a good patriot in him, ending by desiring him to be at once sent to Madrid. Don José then had fulfilled his commission with zeal and promptitude, fully conscious that the

friendship of a general at the Court might be advantageous to his interests. He even anticipated the probability of an order of some kind being conferred upon him. With these pleasant thoughts Señor Sanchez amused himself on his return journey, which having been delayed till late, was lighted by the still, soft, melancholy moon.

The door of Juan Martin's house was opened, and Gabriel gliding out, called softly outside Ana's window. It was noiselessly opened, but before Gabriel could distinguish the face of his loved one, a deep sigh announced her presence.

"Do not cry, Ana—it breaks my heart," said he.

"Are you not going away?" replied she.

"Should I not have gone away if I had become a soldier?"

"Yes—but you would have returned!"

"Do you then believe I shall not return, Ana?"

"I fear it."

"Why—tell me why?"

"Because your father will not wish you to return."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because he is a proud gentleman!"

"If this were so, we must wait."

"I don't mind that, if you will return."

"I will come back—if not before, as soon as I am of age."

Ana bent her graceful head and said, mournfully, "You will have forgotten me by then."

"Do you really think so?" said Gabriel sadly.

"Yes—you know the couplet—

> "'Can you withstand me?'
> Said Time to Love;
> 'Your pride shall you see
> Conquered by me.'"

"If you do not believe in the constancy of love, will you believe my promise, Ana?" said Gabriel sorrowfully.

"Swear to me then that you will not forget me."

"Is my word of honour not enough?"

"No—I wish God and the angels to hear you."

"I swear then," said Gabriel in an agitated voice, "never to love or take any other wife than yourself—by our Mother, and by the blood that Jesus shed for us! If I do not keep my word may my guardian angel, who hears me, turn from me and forsake me for ever! And can I trust in your love, Ana?"

"As in the faith of your salvation, Gabriel. If I forget you, may the Virgin *de los Dolores*, when I call her mother, say to me, 'I know thee not!'"

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day Gabriel departed.

"Á Dios, my son," said Juan Martin as he took leave of him, "I have not been able to teach you the ways of a great city, where there are books and learned men, but I have given you the Christian

training I had from my father, and this is enough to make you a good man, the best thing to be in this world, one who can always hold up his head. Never believe what many teach now-a-days, that the things of God are old, for God renews His presence continually and judges all He sees. Besides falsehood never gains by its youth, nor truth by its age. Steer your way uprightly, and when honour and advantage don't agree, stick to honour; two things a man must have to be a gentleman, spotless honour and a clear conscience. We should remember that from the day we are born we begin to die; nothing is more certain, and nothing more forgotten. These are my lessons, Gabriel, and simple as they are, they are the commandments of God, and perhaps more correct than the intricate teaching of learned men. They condemned the Just One, while simple shepherds were the first to welcome Him, and humble fishermen were His first disciples. It was upon no proud noble that the Lord founded His holy Church, but upon a poor repentant sinner, who was thus blest, not for his knowledge, but for his love and tears."

"Father," answered Gabriel, "two things will live in my heart while life lasts, the lessons you have taught me by precept and example, and my love and gratitude to you. And now, father, that I have a name to offer, I can ask of you a favour that will crown my obligations to you—that you will grant me Ana for my wife."

"My son," replied Juan Martin, "I cannot and will not allow you to be engaged. You are about to enter on a new life, and after awhile your views of everything may change."

"And because some things change, father, you fear change in me?"

"I do not say that, but that your views, not your feelings, may change, and you may then find that Ana would be out of her element among grand people. And I do not choose my daughter to be looked down upon anywhere, when she can be a perfect princess in her own house. The bird only lives and sings happily where her nest is."

"So I think," said Gabriel with spirit and feeling; "I am the bird, and my nest Valdeflores. God give me life to return to it, and keep you in health."

"Let us leave the future in God's hand, Gabriel. Time works without our help, and whether you return or not, you carry with you your country father's blessing."

Gabriel arrived at Madrid, and the first interview between the father and son was by no means cordial or satisfactory on either side. Gabriel respectfully informed his father of his wish to return to the country where he had been brought up, to which he was so much attached. His father laughed derisively, and forbade him to repeat his absurd proposal, with stern despotic assertion of his paternal authority.

"What a difference between Juan Martin and

this señor!" was the conviction forced upon Gabriel's mind at this interview, and confirmed upon many subsequent occasions.

"What a stupid, ignorant fool!" thought the father, discontentedly; "what a training that idiotic Sanchez has given him!"

The General gave his son masters, and made him follow a course of study, by which he profited admirably; and he gave himself up with pleasure to the work of storing his active mind and good memory with useful knowledge, especially as he met with little affection from his father, and found no attraction in the society and amusements that surrounded him. Fortunately for Gabriel, his occupations suited his tastes and filled his life, since his sensitive and reserved nature unfitted him to associate with those whose feelings and ideas were completely opposed to his own. The father and son remained hopelessly estranged from each other. The General remarked of his son to some of his *confrères* after a private supper: "His masters tell me that he has much intelligence, a good memory and understanding, but he carries his love of study so far as to be absorbed in his books, and I have not much hope of his ever becoming a useful or enthusiastic member of the political, moral, social, national, religious, legislative, doctrinal, vocal and instrumental regeneration of the nineteenth century. But I hope he may be a member likely to assist in the easier science of the demolition of the ancient worn-out

social edifice raised by barbarism, ignorance, superstition, and despotism, the fruits of which have been the Inquisition that has ruined, and the religious orders that have enslaved us."

This peroration was much applauded by the interested followers of the General, who often treated his son to similar discourses. In this manner about three years had passed, when the General one morning said to his son:

"I hope your useless life of ancient philosophy and mute wisdom is drawing to a close. I shall not allow you longer to vegetate as you have hitherto done at my expense."

Gabriel, in his quiet way, replied to his father: "Señor, I was just about to speak to you upon the same subject. I am now five-and-twenty, and I may form my own opinion as to my future life."

"Let me hear what this boasted opinion you have formed is," replied the enemy of despotism, with a cold deprecating smile.

"When I came to you," answered Gabriel, "I told you that I wished to remain in my former modest position, since I believed then, when I knew nothing, and still believe, that a man may be dignified, though obscure and poor. You would not grant my wish, desiring me to cultivate my mind, thinking thus to change my ideas and inclinations, and as my father I obeyed you. But now that I have acquired some knowledge of books, and some practical insight into the busy active world, full of

evil passions, I still retain the same sentiment, because I am convinced that the men of the so-called cultured class are less worthy than those I have met with in a narrower sphere."

The General was too much surprised at his son's words to answer him, and Gabriel continued: "But I do not wish to offend you. Have you any other plans for me?"

"Of course, I had," replied his father angrily; "was I to suppose that you would retain your low views and inclinations after being three years with me, during which I have placed you in your proper social rank, and tried to eradicate your vulgar tendencies and improve your mind? You are still as narrow and petty in your ideas as the day you arrived. What have you then gained from your books and studies?"

"Much, Señor: they have served to confirm and strengthen my instinctive conviction that the foundations of a good happy life are an honourable mind, and a natural, simple, Christian training, the practical results of the eloquent moral phrases and æsthetic aspirations of the poets. My reading has taught me that there is more true greatness in fulfilling the humblest duty, than in the false philosophy that denies and despises everything that really exalts human nature."

"What do you understand by duties?" exclaimed his father.

"Señor, you know that I met with the affection

of a mother when I was a deserted orphan; that I was protected and brought up to manhood by a good man, who sold the half of his property to save me from being a soldier. But you do not know that he has an only daughter, who was the sweet sister of my lonely childhood."

"I suppose you became her lover," said the General, smiling.

"No one but you, father, should dare to suspect my honour. I love her, and have promised to marry her."

"Childish words! I cannot see what claim she has upon your duty!"

"I belong to those quiet country people who pass through life with the simple Christian definition of its object, 'We live to work, and die to rest.' Upon this religious basis and a chivalrous spirit the Spaniards have founded a code of honour, whose laws are to me a duty."

"And what are the laws of honour and conscience of these knights of the round table?" asked the General, scornfully.

"Señor, they call a man low-born, who is ungrateful," said Gabriel in a firm tone; "they call a man infamous, who breaks his plighted word; and they call the man a villain, who deceives and forsakes a woman he has promised to marry."

The General wished to speak, but Gabriel continued: "And there, Señor, they punish ignominiously the man who abandons his parents in their old age."

At the last words the General turned scarlet, then grew pale, fixing a terribly scrutinizing gaze upon his son; but observing his modest calmness the General restrained his agitation, mumuring to himself, "He cannot know. Who could have told him?" Rising, he said haughtily to his son, "Have you considered what you say? This is open rebellion."

Gabriel answered: "What have I done to offend you? Have you not taught me that man is free? Have you not impressed upon me that I need submit neither to civil nor religious obligations? And why may I not at my majority humbly dispose of my future, and fulfil what I consider duties agreeable to my heart and conscience?"

"Because I do not wish you to descend from the rank to which you belong. Let us talk sense. Your marriage with the daughter of Sanchez is proposed; he would not only give her a good dowry—if he could obtain the order he desires for himself—but secure to his son-in-law the majority of votes in his district as member."

"You are surely not in earnest, Señor? Have I the position, standing, knowledge, experience, popularity, and prestige necessary to a representative of the country?"

"Don't trouble yourself with theories and scruples. Be a positivist, and set yourself in opposition until you attain a good position by some change of government. I hope you have a brilliant future before you."

"No, Señor," said Gabriel firmly, "since my private reasons do not weigh with you, I will tell you that the rule of conduct I have resolved to adopt will also prevent my accepting what you propose. It is 'honour before *honours*.'"

"Leave my presence, and let me never see you again," cried the General, giving vent to his concentrated anger.

"Before we separate, I hope you will at least give me your blessing," said Gabriel respectfully.

"I promise you my absolute indifference, and shall take care that nothing I possess ever reaches your unworthy hands," replied the General, leaving the room.

Gabriel at once prepared for his departure, and sold the articles of luxury that had been indispensable to him in society, his clothes, arms, and all he possessed. The sum they produced, added to the allowance made him by his father for the so-called necessaries of a young man's life, was sufficient to surprise him. He laid aside the fashionable Cashmere dressing-gown lately brought him by his father from Paris, and resumed with infinite pleasure the graceful Serrano dress he had worn when he entered his father's house, in which he again breathed freely, and exclaimed: "I am now free! Free from ambition, care, rivalries, hatred, temptation, and remorse! Free as the air and the bird; free as the innocent heart which, like them, rises to God!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It was evening. Nature was as peaceful as in the unconscious change from sleep to dreams, from life to death. The leaves of the trees were silent and motionless. The silence was as absolute as if the air neither received nor transmitted the faintest sound; yet it bore from time to time the fragrance of the wild rosemary to Ana, who was seated at the open door of her house, against which she leant her head. She fixed her eyes upon the pale moon, and sang in a low, mournful tone a slow, sad love-song, watching meanwhile Tio Matías who, sitting near her, bent forward to hear her singing better. The poor old man, who was then more than ninety, remained well and lively, as if the charity by which he lived was to be prolonged; for if the spirit of evil constantly tempts men to act wickedly, our good angels never tire of offering us opportunities of doing good. Ana, who knew how much Tio Matías loved Gabriel, smiled as she met his sympathetic gaze, not with a joyous but a gentle smile, and said, as if to show that she knew that they were both thinking of the absent one: "Will he return?"

The old man, remembering the wife who had died, and the son who had for ever left him, replied, shaking his white head—

"Ah, my child, those who die do not return to life; those who go away do not return."

The tears rolled down Ana's cheeks.

"Do you say he will not return? Then love alone teaches faith and hope. He will return. Tio Matías, my heart is a truer prophet than you are."

Estefanía, who had been busy with her household affairs, returned at that moment, and heard Ana's last words.

"My child," said she, "you expect an impossibility. How can you imagine that Gabriel, the son of a leader of the extreme party, can come back among country villagers. You are wilfully blind, darling. You should try to lay aside these vain hopes. Gabriel, now a great man at court, does not still remember you."

"You don't know Gabriel, mother!"

"Do I not know the good, noble boy? But, Ana, the world will not change for us. God has been pleased to take from us a son and lover. We must submit."

Just then Juan Martin came in from the town.

"Have you seen Don José? Have you heard any news of *him?*" asked his wife anxiously.

"I saw Don José," answered Juan. "He was just mounting his horse to go to La Higuera to take possession of a chestnut tree belonging to an unfortunate man who had mortgaged it to him, and was unable to repay the money when due. I asked after *him*. 'He is quite well,' said he; 'but what does it matter to you how he is? Everything comes to an end, and you have done with Gabriel.

If you wish me to ask his father to recompense you for his bringing up, you had better do it yourself. And don't come here bothering me any more, nor your wife either.'"

"He said that?" said Estefanía.

"Yes, and I didn't answer him," replied Juan. "What is the use of arguing with an ass? But he told me something else," added Ana's father, with suppressed emotion: "When he had mounted his horse, before starting, he called after me, 'Juan Martin, I forgot to tell you that Señor Don Gabriel Labrador is going to be married.'"

At this Estefanía gave a cry, Ana a gentle sigh. Juan Martin looked sadly at his daughter, and Tio Matías said in a broken voice, "Those who go away do not return."

"I do not believe it," exclaimed Estefanía, who, notwithstanding what she had said to her daughter, had also felt hopes of Gabriel's return, almost unconsciously, repeating vehemently: "I do not believe it. Gabriel must and will return!"

"Estefanía," said Juan, understanding the mother's intention of consoling her daughter, "do not try to avoid the inevitable. Gabriel will not return—so much is certain. Do you believe, however much he might wish it, that he would be allowed to do so?"

Juan was silent, and the only sounds heard were Ana's sobs and her mother's kisses. Tio Matías fixed his eyes upon two horsemen who were riding

on the road from La Higuera, and steadily approaching Juan Martin's house.

"Estefanía," said the latter to his wife, "we have one child the less. Ana, my daughter, your love is unfortunate—forget it."

"Is forgetfulness to be bought when needed?" said Estefanía.

"Yes, Estefanía," replied Juan; "God grants it to a strong will in return for prayer."

"It is easy to say that, Juan."

"It may be difficult to do this, but more sensible than to expect impossibilities; and Gabriel's return is impossible."

"Why, here he is!" exclaimed Tio Matías suddenly, with almost supernatural energy. But before any one in the house had time to say a word, a youth rushed through the door, and warmly embraced Juan Martin. Estefanía supported her daughter, who had fainted, and Tio Matías fell back upon the bench, raising to heaven his crossed hands and sunken eyes. Don José Sanchez, who had followed Gabriel, alone remained cold and impassible to this touching scene.

"And I, who knew nothing of his coming," said he to himself, since no one paid attention to him. "No doubt he wished to surprise me. I was coming from La Higuera when I met a horseman, and when I looked at him again it was Gabriel. He never wrote to tell me he was coming, but compliments are not wanted among relations. Passing this way,

he wanted to see Estefanía, his good old nurse. But we can't stay late, Gabriel," added he in a louder voice. "I don't care about riding at night, although it is moonlight."

Gabriel, who during Don José's monologue had been in his mother's arms, turned to Don José, saying, "Go whenever you like; I won't detain you."

"Then are you not coming home with me?" said Don José, astonished.

"No, Señor, I am going to stay here," replied Gabriel.

"You can't well do that when the house of your future family is in the town," replied the rich man, uneasily.

"The home of my past, present, and future family is here," said Gabriel.

"Let us understand one another. Don't you come here to marry?"

"Yes, Señor."

"Is not my daughter to be your wife?"

"No, Señor; here is my future wife," said Gabriel, presenting to him the shy and blushing Ana, whose rosy cheeks were bathed in tears.

Annoyance, anger, and humiliation overwhelmed the proud and hypocritical Sanchez. His eyes shot daggers, his beard trembled, and he snorted furiously.

"You scorn my daughter?" said he, with a forced, haughty smile.

"No, Señor, I fulfil the dictates of my heart and conscience," replied Gabriel.

"You despise my property?" continued Don José.

"I do," said Gabriel decidedly.

"And my alliance?" said Don José.

"I care for it as little as you did for the deserted orphan whom Juan Martin protected," replied Gabriel.

"Then to punish your grand airs from Court, where your father now thinks himself a fine gentleman, and to force you to hang down your proud head, learn what I had promised your father never to reveal. This wretched old man dependent upon charity, this 'Tio Limosna,' is the noble founder of your illustrious race, and your grandfather; your father, the good-for-nothing son who forsook him," said Don José in a vindictive tone.

"My grandfather?" said Gabriel, turning affectionately to the trembling old man. "Now I understand why I loved him so much in my childhood! How cruel it was of you not to tell me sooner, Don José!"

Suddenly throwing himself at Juan Martin's feet, Gabriel said in broken words—

"I can never be grateful enough for all I owe you. You supported the helpless child and the deserted old man when you were yourself poor. You denied yourself to give them what they needed. You did it without expecting praise or reward—out of pure Christian charity!"

"Gabriel," said Juan, raising his son, "do not

make me blush. Praise, if deserved, wearies; if undeserved, is a reproach. If you wish to please me, be kind to your mother."

"I need say nothing to her. Our mothers and our guardian angels can read our thoughts."

Don José was indignant at not being able to humiliate Gabriel, and turning to poor Tio Limosna, said, "What may your real name be, if you have any?"

"Let those call me 'Limosna' whose alms I have received. My name is Matías Vega."

"Then your son gave up his father's name for some bad purpose, and falsely called himself Labrador," continued the malicious Don José, adding—

"I would lose my head rather than commit such felony. I am Don José Sanchez all the world over!" Whereupon Don José Sanchez pompously departed.

"Don't mind him," said Estefanía to Gabriel.

"Mother, do you believe this foolish despicable man has power to humiliate or annoy me?" replied Gabriel, adding as he looked at Ana, "When are we to be married?"

Estefanía looked at her husband, who said, "Gabriel, you know we have not much to spare. Nothing is yet prepared for your housekeeping or for the wedding expenses."

"I am prepared for all that, father," answered Gabriel, unfastening his vest, and drawing out a

belt containing the money he had realised and collected.

Juan Martin and Estefanía were astounded,

"Did your father give you this?" asked the former.

"Yes, Señor—I owe it to him," answered Gabriel, placing the belt in Ana's hand, according to the custom of the people, that the wife keeps the money.

Ana, going up to Tio Matías, said, "The first thing I shall buy with this money is a complete costume for you, to wear at your grandson's wedding;" although, added the poor girl with her natural grace and vivacity, "I ought to be angry with you, and not remember your gracious name."

"Why?" inquired Gabriel.

"Because he often broke my heart by saying to me, "Those who go away do not return."

"A better grandfather than prophet," said Gabriel, putting his arm round the poor old man, who, taking his hand affectionately, said: "But sometimes my predictions have been fulfilled, as Estefanía can say."

"Which of them?" asked Gabriel.

"The one I made on the day when, abandoned by all, I placed you in her arms and said, blessing her: 'Estefanía—the good you do still comes to you.'"

NATIONAL PICTURES.

LUCAS GARCIA.

CHAPTER I.

FROM Xeres towards the Ronda mountains (that gradually rise as if to form an adequate pedestal for San Christobal) extends a broad table-land bearing the name of Llanos (plains) of Caulina. A bare and monotonous road bordered by small palm-trees, after winding for two leagues onwards, stops short at the foot of the first elevated ground, from which flows a sluggish stream that in summer becomes dry and muddy. On the right is the Castle of Melgarejo, one of the few Moorish buildings that have not been destroyed by time and its faithful assistant, Ignorance. Time makes ruins, groups them, crowns them with garlands, and adorns them with foliage, as if in sport; but Ignorance (like a barbarian who gives no quarter) does not even spare ruins, but delights in dust, desolation, and nothingness.

Four square towers flank the angles of the castle, which, like the walls of the whole enclosure, are surmounted by well-formed battlements, regular, solid, and unbroken, like a perfect set of teeth.

The castle was named Melgarejo on account of its having been conquered by a knight of Xeres of that name. The way he carried out this exploit is so curious that we cannot help relating it, for the benefit of those who are not acquainted with the famous exploits so often recorded in the annals of Xeres. In the fourteenth century this fortress was occupied by one hundred and fifty Moors with their families. They wore white, the Moorish colour, and rode iron-grey horses. Shut up as they were, they subsisted by making night forays, carrying off all the booty they could lay hands upon. Melgarejo then proposed to conquer this strong castle, surrounded by a wide moat, no longer existing, which, dug as it was by the Moors themselves, was fated to become their tomb. The Christian knight promised liberty to a slave he had, if he would faithfully second him in the undertaking he contemplated. Master and servant having laid their plan, the former desired the latter, an excellent horseman, to instruct a singularly agile mare he possessed to leap ditches, gradually increasing their width, until she could accomplish that of the moat surrounding the Saracen fortress. Then Melgarejo assembled his followers, disguised them like Moors, making them cover their horses with white mantles, and

one night, in the absence of the defenders of the castle, he fell upon it. Those who were expecting the return of the Moors, saw the party approach without suspicion; but when the Christians were near enough for them to perceive the error, they endeavoured to raise the drawbridge. However the slave of Melgarejo on his active horse leaped the moat, and cut the cords of the portcullis, so that it could not be raised, and the men of Xeres became masters of the fortress. This strong castle, over which destroying Time has passed without leaving traces of itself, transports one with such force of illusion back to the past, that one feels astonished not to see the pennon of the crescent fluttering from its towers, or a white turban gleaming from behind each battlement. What a site this would be for an imaginary tournament between Moors and Christians!

To go to Arcos we leave on the left the sleepy stream, and the dead castle, within which, like the ants inhabiting a skeleton, move labourers with the implements of their peaceful farm-work. This first step of the Sierra crosses other plains, covered, as far as the eye can reach, with rich harvests, and without any other inn or resting-place it halts at the farm of Peñuela, formerly the property of the Carthusian fathers, that religious order so strict, so respectable, and so respected, that even the peasants wonder how any power or any hand could have dared to touch such men and such things!

The rising ground is covered with olive-trees as

if to adorn old white Arcos, which proudly preserves its title of a city, its ancient privileges, and lawful rights, in spite of its decay, or rather, of its stagnant life, amidst the constant advances of time, ever marching with soft, steady, yet imperceptible steps.

To the eyes of a traveller, tired with the ascent, Arcos appears and disappears alternately, as if retaining, from the days of its Moorish founders, some guerilla instincts, until, passing between two high rocks, he suddenly enters the town, the situation of which strikes with admiration even those least sensible to the beauties of nature, or the charms of the picturesque.

On an evening of the year 1850, many people might have been seen making their way to a house of poor appearance in one of the streets in the San Francisco quarter from whence the body of her who had been its mistress, had been borne the previous evening. They had assembled for the "mourning," according to the strict etiquette observed in the country, in itself a proof of dignity and courtesy, assuming that etiquette and ceremony in public or private life are not merely vain forms, as they are sometimes said to be by the restless spirits of our age, who desire to lay aside every moral and material restraint; but rather the external expression of our homage to divine, and reverence for earthly things.

Within the house was one room where the women were assembled, and another lent by a neighbour for the use of the men. In the former, carefully white-

washed and prepared for the occasion, a cloth was spread on a mat in the centre, into which all who entered threw one or two copper coins for St. Bernard's Mass, or for the poor. This touching custom is observed not only amongst the poor but the well-to-do classes, and with reason; for if honourable obsequies, a handsome coffin, or a pompous monument be worthy of respect, our best titles to heavenly glory are the mite of charity, and the prayers of our people and church.

In a corner of the room, on a low chair, sat the mourning girl of eight years old, who, weary with weeping for her mother, as also of sitting so long in one position, had leaned her head against the arm of the chair and fallen asleep. Sleep, so loving to the young, always hastens to soothe them when suffering in mind or body.

"Poor Lucia!" said one of the mourners, a relation of the deceased woman; "how she will miss her mother."

"That was the thorn in poor Anna's side," observed a neighbour.

"But of what did she die?" inquired another.

"That secret lies in her grave," replied the relative, "for Anna never complained. If she had not been worn to a thread, yellow as wax, and so weak that a shadow might have knocked her down, no one would have known she was so near her last home."

"She died," exclaimed vehemently a young woman of energetic appearance; "she died, as

every one knows, from poison in the blood. If we but had a magistrate in the province, who would unmask those shameless, strange women, who come here to set up wine-shops, entrap married men, and ruin them and every one belonging to them!"

"Yes, the magistrates are blind to these things," said the relative of Anna, "as in other things they see too far; but never mind, friend, they will have their reward; for if God permits it, He will not always do so."

"Yes," replied the other, "He allows the good to die, and the wicked to crow over them. God reserves to Himself the justice of heaven, but He has placed the wand of earthly justice in the hands of men, and to Him they will have to account for their use of it. Our Alcalde deserves to have his broken over his shoulders."

"Neighbour," said an old woman, "you are hotter than fire, and rush forward like the bulls, with your eyes closed. Think of what you say, and remember that 'a sore wound may heal, but a sore reputation kills.' Poor Anna was never well since her last child was born, and the autumn of life was fatal to her. You know the saying—'From friar to friar[1] we need God's care.'"

"Well, Tia Maria," replied the woman addressed, "as you are Juan Garcia's aunt, and the Alcalde's cousin, you say this, for 'right or wrong, may God and our own help us.' All I can tell you is that my

[1] St. Augustine's Day, August 28, and St. Francis' Day, October 4.

Juan shall not enter the Leona's wine-shop—that is my affair. For, were a man as good as Job himself, in a slippery house he who does not fall stumbles. Although you say she is a widow, and of sedate age, I cannot forget the proverb—'He who springs uprightly, falls on his feet.' And I say again and again that this wicked, coarse sergeant's wife deserves quartering alive. The old sentry she is, with her ugly, black face, all marked with small-pox, and whiskers like a national guard. They say, 'A bearded woman should be kept at a distance.'"

"And her children," said the friend of Anna; "what miserable, neglected things they are! But what wickedness could be equal to that of leading away a married man, with children, ruining him, disgracing his home, and killing his wife with trouble? And those who know this, can see it quietly—it is too much to bear."

"It is a public scandal!" said one.

"It is a crime as bad as murder," said another.

"We can do no good by abusing the man," said Tia Maria; "let us pray for the soul of the departed, that is our first duty."

A complete silence followed. Tia Maria and the others took their rosaries, and after the act of contrition and a solemn credo, recited the rosary of the dead, in which after the Paternoster, instead of the salutation to the Virgin, is repeated ten times, "Lord, by Thy infinite mercy," and the response, "May the spirits of the blest enjoy peace and

glory!" The mourning women were then heard to murmur their orations, and their smothered sighs of grief and sorrow.

The room where the widower and his friends were assembled presented a very different aspect. As soon as the day of the funeral was over, he seemed to feel himself released from all obligation of real mourning, and, cool and collected, was smoking and chatting with those around him, with as much indifference as if death, on entering his dwelling, had not left there its dark traces and solemn impression. Those less interested had followed his example, so that, but for their wearing cloaks, no one would have said that they were paying a tribute of love and respect to the end of a life, and the beginning of a sorrow. One face only in this group was in sympathy with the event that had brought it together, and this was that of Juan Garcia's son, thirteen years of age, who, seated in a corner near his father, leant his elbows upon his knees, and his head upon his hands, and wept hopelessly. Presently the vesper bell rang. All rose and took off their hats.

"You must recite the prayer, Tio Bartolo," said the widower.

Tio Bartolo, a little thin active old man, recited the oration, and afterwards a Paternoster for the dead woman. The sobs of the boy from his corner resounded through the room.

"Dry these tears, Lucas," said his father. "Men do not weep. Why, you have been two days crouched

up like an old woman! You should have gone to the room with the women. Don't let me hear you cry again, that's all."

"I can tell you, Juan Garcia," said Tio Bartolo, "that you are the first man I ever heard rebuke a son for weeping for his mother. See me at my age, with my grey hairs and my guerrillero life—yet when I remember my own I weep, as you see."

"Still, Tio Bartolo," replied Juan Garcia, "trial and teaching make a good son. This Lucas, who has been brought up at his mother's apron-string, is a spoilt boy, and I wish to teach him that men overcome trouble, and do not allow themselves to be overcome by it."

Tio Bartolo shook his head, and said, "Time, and not remedies, can cure his malady, Juan. If you had died, his mother would not have denied to your son the tears he shed for you."

Juan Garcia continued his previous way of life, abandoning himself more than ever to the woman mentioned by the friends of his deceased wife. This bad woman was generally called Leona, from the Isle of Leon, her native place, and had been married to a sergeant, who had gone to America. She was, like all wicked women, much worse than men of the same class, because in the subtle organisation of a woman, the delicacy she is endowed with for good is capable of a refinement of evil, and her quick instinct changes into malicious sagacity.

Having succeeded in attracting to herself Juan

Garcia, who possessed some property, the Leona further succeeded, not only in making him indifferent to his wife, but also, moved by the base and bitter envy of a wicked woman for a good one, in inducing him to neglect her completely, and even to ill-use her. Juan Garcia was a weak man, easily led by a person he cared for, although obstinate, harsh, and tyrannical with those whom he did not love. Gradually it had gone so far as that the Leona would only receive him graciously when he could tell her of some act of unkindness to his poor victim, whose only crime was her upright and patient conduct, the strongest reproof of his own wickedness, the more remarkable because the habits of the country people are, as a rule, free from reproach. Lest our assertion on this point should appear too favourable to them, we hasten to add that this excellent trait in peasant life may be naturally traced to the good influence of labour, which preserves its sons from idleness and the vices born of it, and of holy poverty, which stifles the rise of evil desires by its inability to satisfy them. Having given these material reasons for it, we will add to them the sound ideas of morality and rooted principles of honour instilled into the people by many centuries of Catholic Christianity.

Juan Garcia was then one of the exceptions that are always found to every general rule, and certainly his ill treatment, added to the grief and shame caused by it, had contributed to the death of his poor wife, who pardoned him as a last proof of her

affection and Christian charity. But the mind of Juan Garcia was too much degraded to be roused to compassion or remorse by this tragic event. Not that this man was utterly worthless, but that he was blind—as so many are in this erring world—with that mental blindness that unhappily lasts until God's judgment-day, when the light of truth will be the first punishment that awaits it. His poor children were neglected, and would have been completely uncared for but for the active charity of their fellow-countrywomen, who are earnest protectors of the helpless, and severe judges of the unworthy. So the neighbours looked after the children, and compelled their father to support and clothe them, boldly reproaching him for his misconduct, and reminding him, with great firmness, of his responsibilities.

The poor children were inconsolable for the loss of their mother, and, isolated as they were, every feeling became concentrated in their strong affection for each other, and grief for her death. Lucas, who was five years older than his little sister, did all he could to rouse and amuse her. "Do not cry, Lucia," he said to her one night, some time after their great sorrow, "mother will not return to us, and you only make me cry too. What shall I do to amuse you? Shall I sing you a song?" Lucia nodded in assent, and the boy sang in a sweet, full voice the sad, simple melody, the words of which we transcribe. The following curious old ballad, said to be of im-

mense antiquity, is closely imitated from the original Spanish.

"Most holy God of Light!
Oh teach my tongue to tell,
What in Seville befell
A good woman, with daughters two.
One was gentle and kind;
One was haughty and cold;
They wedded two brothers unlike.
The younger an idler became,
Who gambled and sold his all;
The elder, a worker brave,
Who left not his field untilled.
A year of distress came round,
And the younger brother died;
His widow, lone, poor, and sad,
Whose children clamoured for bread,
Went forth to her sister's house,
And, sore weeping, thus she said:
'Sister, I beg, for God's sake,
For His, and His Mother's sake,
You will come to my help in need,
So may God you never forsake.'
The sister said, 'Mary, away!
I cannot do aught for you now.
On the day we were wedded both,
We were equal in worldly wealth.'
So Mary went weeping home,
Weary and broken-hearted;
Her neighbours heard her sobs,
But she said she needed no aid.
She only sought a retreat,
Near the Virgin's altar blest,
That stood in a room at home.
Meanwhile, her brother-in-law
Came in from his field to eat;
He found his table all spread,
And hastened to cut the bread,

But, alas! it was wet with blood!
'Tell me, how is this, my wife?
Say, what misfortune is ours?'
'Would it were not mine to tell,'
The sister said with a sigh.
'This morning came Mary in woe,
And I—my pity denied!'
'Who denies his sister bread,
Denies it to Mary above.'
The man with these words went forth,
Bearing six loaves in his hand.
As he neared his sister's house,
Doors, windows, and blinds were closed;
Many lights shone through the chinks,
And around six bodies still,
Six angels knelt on their knees!
His wife's sister, and hers, lay there!
With tears he said, 'My sister,
And ye—children of my heart—
In God's hand blessed are you,
Would that I could change with you!
Toil and trouble now will cease,
For eternal rest and peace!'"

"She let her sister die of hunger," said the child, whose eyes were filled with sympathetic tears.

"Yes; she was a wicked woman. But do not cry, Lucia. A song is not a reality."

"But if it had not really happened, it could not have been made into a song," argued the child.

"It was invented," said Lucas. "Don't you see that it would be impossible for one sister to leave another to die, without helping her? Do not fear that I could do it, Lucia. When I am a man, and can work, every bit of bread that I earn shall

be shared with you, darling. You know that before mother died, she gave you to my care, and I promised her never to forsake you."

"You will keep your word, Lucas?"

"As I hope to be saved."

"If that time ever should come, I will sing you this song that you may remember what you now promise me."

"That's right. You shall learn it yourself."

And the boy taught the song to his little sister. Seven years passed away thus. Lucia was then fifteen, and had become one of those graceful creatures who are sometimes met with in genial climates. Lucas, who was twenty, had grown into a handsome youth, and was so steady and industrious that he was preferred to all other farm or field labourers. They both resembled their mother, who was of the fine Andalusian type of beauty, with round face, delicate aquiline nose, large, black, expressive eyes, a small mouth with perfect teeth, and a broad open brow, in every movement grace and dignity. Their father, on the other hand, was still governed by the Leona, who squandered all he had, and made him reckless and drunken, that he might be the more completely in her power. To quiet her, he sold everything he possessed, and continued hopelessly and involuntarily on the fatal course he had chosen for himself. Since Lucas had been able to work, he alone had maintained his home with the daily labour that

God seems to bless, as He blessed the bread and fishes that were to feed the poor. How a peseta, sometimes two reals, can maintain the father, mother, generally half-a-dozen robust children, besides an invalid father, mother, or other aged relative; clothe them all—the dress of an Andalusian peasant costs nearly 1,000 reals—pay rent, meet the expenses of illness and holidays, and still find the sou never denied to a beggar, is incomprehensible, if we are inconsiderate or blind enough not to see in it the hand of a heavenly Father.

Lucas, who tenderly loved his sister, seeing her quite unnoticed by her father, assumed over her the recognised and unquestioned authority belonging to the eldest brother (failing that of a father), to which is added the obligation to maintain his brothers (an unwritten code in the hearts of the people, but hardly ever broken by them); and uncultivated as he was, might fairly be compared with the knightly and poetic brothers held up to admiration for their chivalry and nice sense of honour, in the best drawn characters of Calderon, Lopez de Vega, and other contemporary poets. Lucia, like her mother, was gentle, loving, and yielding. She looked up to her brother with a tenderness not unmingled with respect.

One evening, some of Juan Garcia's neighbours were met together in the courtyard of the house in which he lived.

"Have you heard the news?" said the relative

of Anna. "They say that Leona's husband is dead. What do you think of that?"

"That the Leona will not care much for that!" said another woman.

"But I care for it," said Anna's cousin, "for they say Juan Garcia is going to marry this disreputable widow, and I have no doubt it is true, for he will never be able to escape from her clutches now."

"It is too true," observed the other; "she has induced him to take to drinking, and is not even content with wine, but gives him a worse enemy, brandy. She will not rest until she has robbed him of everything. She is avarice itself, creeping along with one hand on the earth, and another pointing to heaven, and with open mouth, that nothing may escape her."

"She will be Juan's third wife. It is to be hoped he will outlive her, but she seems to be very tough. Nothing hurts her. The cholera that killed so many good people about here, did not approach her house."

At that moment Lucas entered. It was Saturday, and he was going to rest on Sunday.

"Lucas," said his cousin, "do you know that the Leona has become a widow, and that they say your father is going to marry her?"

Lucas was thunderstruck, but he retained calmness enough to say—"Tia Manuela, you must be dreaming, or in your dotage!"

"Don't call me old, Luquillas," said the cheerful old woman. "Only wine and parchment ever grow old—but my boy," she added more seriously, "every one says this about your father."

"Behind my back they may say what they please—one cannot command tongues and thoughts like soldiers. But in my presence, my father shall not be lightly spoken of."

Silencing the gossips with these words, Lucas entered his dwelling. After staying some time with his sister, to whom he spoke not one word of his cause for anxiety, giving her the money he had brought home, and talking cheerfully and kindly to her, Lucas went to see his neighbour, Tio Bartolo. He knew that the old soldier, on account of his age, excellent judgment, and friendship for the father of Juan Garcia, had great influence over him; and could think of no better chance of dissuading him from the disastrous step he might intend to take, than to beg Tio Bartolo's advice and help.

When Lucas had confided to him his fears, the old man shook his head sadly and replied: "The proverb says, 'Place not your fingers between two grindstones;' but for your sake and poor Lucia's, I will do what you wish, at the risk of losing your father's friendship, which I am sure to do, but nothing will come of it."

"We don't know what we can do till we try, Tio Bartolo."

"I have told you that I will try. You shall never have it to say that you asked me a favour in vain. I only wish to remind you that advice is thrown away upon obstinate people, and precious stones upon pigs. And to say the truth, I would as soon encounter an old wild boar as your father, who is entangled in the wiles of that wretched woman, like a fly in a spider's web."

The following day the veteran went to the house of his neighbour, whom he found unwell. After the first salutations, Tio Bartolo, who, old as he was, had not learnt diplomacy, proceeded to say: "Let us come to the point, without beating about the bush. I hear, but I cannot believe, that you are going to be married."

Juan frowningly replied: "As I have not said so to any one, how can you have heard it?"

Answering one question by asking another is an obscure rule of grammar much resorted to by uneducated people. Tio Bartolo continued: "Then you see how sharp people are now-a-days! They must have guessed your very thoughts. So you have only thought of it as yet?"

"I am not obliged to tell you my thoughts, as if you were my confessor," replied Juan evasively.

"I can only conclude from your remarks that you intend to do it," replied Tio Bartolo, "for you do not seem to deny it."

"Nothing is settled yet," said Juan.

"Do you know what you are about to do? Have you your senses about you?"

"Yes, Señor, I have my senses, like other people."

"Not all of them. I think you know that I am your true friend, and the proverb has it that 'an old ox ploughs straight.' If you have any faith in me, take my advice, and do not marry."

"Tio Bartolo, you must give me your reasons; why am I not to marry?"

"Juan, a mistress makes a bad wife."

"If it were true that this woman had lost her reputation on my account, that is the very reason why I ought to marry her——"

"Juan—Juan—do not seek excuses for doing wrong. You well know this woman did not lose her reputation through you. No one can lose what he has not."

"Tio Bartolo, but for your grey hairs, and because you were my father's friend, I would——"

"Come, man, I am not seeking a quarrel with you, but as your friend I should be glad to save you from a fatal step. Have you thought what a stepmother you are giving to your children?"

"My wife will be good enough to be the stepmother of my children. I am the best judge of that."

"I fear not. Your children can never live happily under the rule of this woman, and he who forsakes his children is forsaken by God."

"Take care what you say, Señor. We shall see. The waves must follow the sea, Tio Bartolo."

"Be reasonable, Juan. Lucas, who has a keen sense of honour, will never consent to allow his sister to live with a woman of questionable character."

"If her character has been questioned through me, I can restore it to her. Lucas had better take care how he sets himself up against me. While I live, I crow."

"Remember, Juan, that your son will be the support of your old age. Do not exasperate him."

"I am quite independent of my son. I have enough for myself, my wife, and my daughter."

"What have you, Juan? Pressed grapes yield no wine. Has not this woman already squandered away your quarry and your olive-yard? The house is all you have left, and that may go too before long. You have quite left off earning money, so your property will soon come to an end, and then you will have to go into debt, and lose your credit."

"The Leona has a friend who is a smuggler, and he will give me a share in his business."

"And has it come to that?" exclaimed Tio Bartolo indignantly. "Have you fallen so low as that, Juan Garcia? You cannot be serious. So true is it that 'those who live with wolves learn to howl!' Don't you know that ill-gotten gains only ruin their gainers? In one word, Juan, this bad woman cannot be made good, to please a king or a bishop, and 'one corrupt fruit spoils many sound ones.'"

"As long as I am satisfied, no one else has any right to complain."

"Juan, men should not marry with their eyes shut. You are old enough to know better at your age, over forty——"

"I need forty bushels of patience to hear you, Tio Bartolo. I did not seek your advice."

"Your sin be upon your own head," said Tio Bartolo, rising to go. "This marriage will be your ruin, and you will live to remember what I this day predict, that a day will come when you will see your error and weep."

On returning home, he said to Lucas, who was awaiting him, "There is, as I feared, nothing to be done. All you can do is to submit quietly. The weakest always goes to the wall, and your father is stronger than you."

Lucas returned to his work in despair. The following Saturday, when he went home, he found that his father's marriage was to be given out on the Sunday for the first time, and as a last desperate resort, he resolved to speak to him. We have already said that this abandoned man lived on cold and distant terms with his neglected children; and at length the exemplary conduct of Lucas, and the estimation in which he was held, had aroused that bitter and envious resentment in his father's mind, that men of moral inferiority are so apt to feel for those who, morally superior to them, are yet subject to their authority.

"Señor, they tell me you are going to be married," said Lucas to his father in a firm, gentle tone.

"And so I am," replied Juan.

"I could not believe it," continued Lucas.

"Why not, if you please?"

"Because of the person who was named."

"Is she not to your taste? I suppose you expected me to consult you?"

"No, Señor, not a boy like myself, but some one whose opinion was worth having."

"That is to say," exclaimed Juan with suppressed rage, "that you consider your father requires advice?"

"Yes, Señor," answered Lucas gravely; "when he is about to give a stepmother to his young daughter."

"Do you think I would give her one who would ill-use her or make her work, instead of standing about idle with her hands before her?"

"No, father, Lucia does not mind work—the honour of the poor."

"Or who would shut her up like a house-dog?"

"No, Señor, my sister, although motherless, is modest and quiet in her tastes, and not anxious to push herself forward."

"What is your objection, then?"

"It is," said Lucas firmly, "that this woman does not bear a good name, and that my sister should not be with her."

Juan Garcia, who had hitherto found it difficult

to restrain his anger, turned fiercely upon his son, and struck him a blow upon the head.

"Spare me, father!" exclaimed Lucas sorrowfully. "What have I done to deserve punishment? Have I failed in respect to you? Just before my poor mother died, she begged me to watch over my sister; this is all I am doing."

"That meant," replied Juan, somewhat softened by the allusion to Anna, and his son's respectful manner to himself, "that you should take charge of her if her father could not. While I live, no one else has any authority over her."

"Father, I entreat you to let me take care of her. I will support her."

"Are you in your right senses?"

"For God's sake do not separate us. I will work hard to maintain her and myself."

"There is no question of separating you. You will come to my home with her."

"Not so, father."

"How, not so? What more do you require of me?"

"You are my father, and have absolute authority over me, but you cannot make me live under the same roof with that woman."

"That we shall see, sir."

"We shall see," returned Lucas disconsolately, as he went away.

Lucas had one of the noble and sensitive natures that bear triumph meekly, and defeat with spirit.

But he had also a firmness of character liable to degenerate into obstinacy, if its energy were sustained by pride rather than by reason. Thus it was that neither his father's threats, nor his love for his sister, influenced the resolution he came to in that decisive interview. When he left his father, he sought his sister, whom he found in tears. The brother and sister for some time remained silent, conscious of the cause of their sorrow and distress.

"If our mother could see us," at last exclaimed Lucia.

"Remember, that from heaven she still looks down upon her daughter," replied Lucas; "I can do nothing for you now. I have tried to keep you under my care, but it is beyond my power to resist a father's authority over you."

"I can only do what you tell me, and what our mother wished," said Lucia, weeping bitterly.

"Do not then forget, dearest, that if you bear your cross patiently, it will not be so heavy. Bend to the storm, but stand firmly against evil. Keep the straight path, though it be narrow and thorny. Walk uprightly, and look well before you. Treat your father's wife with civility, but never become intimate with her."

"And you, Lucas?"

"God only knows what I shall do, Lucia," replied her brother.

On the day of Juan's marriage Lucas disappeared, and nothing was heard of him until some days

afterwards a muleteer from Seville informed his father that he had enlisted as a soldier. Juan regretted the loss of his son's dutiful assistance, but found consolation in being freed from a silent yet relentless witness to his misdeeds.

Lucia went to live with her stepmother, and had much to endure from her step-sisters, who, being stupid and ugly, disliked her for her grace and intelligence. At first she bore it patiently, for her brother's sake; but her patience became gradually exhausted, and constant irritation roused her hitherto gentle nature, first to suppressed indignation, and then to rancour. She sometimes longed to humiliate in her turn those who continually trampled upon her feelings, and she became forward and fond of admiration. So quickly do ill weeds grow, when the seed is once sown! About that time a cavalry regiment came to Arcos. The colonel of the regiment, named Gallardo, was rich and well-born, good-natured, and not a little conceited. Money and influence had brought many around him, whose flattery and sycophancy encouraged him in committing, with impunity, actions only to be ventured upon by those possessing his advantages of fortune and position—although there was a time when men in high places felt that they owed an example to those less fortunate than themselves.

Colonel Gallardo was still young, wore his hair carefully curled, and thought a great deal of his

fine figure. He considered conquests in love as honourable as in war; and gallantry in soldiers and coquetry in women the salt and pepper of both races. These ideas, added to an intense vanity, that usurped the place of many better qualities of head and heart, made Colonel Gallardo a despicable and absurd, rather than a wicked or sarcastic man.

This gentleman, a bachelor like most of his class, lodged opposite the Leona's house, and her daughters soon made acquaintance with his attendants, beginning love-songs, to be taken up in turn by the soldiers, who were ready enough to play their part with spirit. It was not long before the Colonel was struck with admiration for the beauty of Lucia. He was not the man to conceal it, and Lucia, alas! no longer the timid and retiring girl, who shrank from attentions, which soon became talked of in the town. When Gallardo heard more of the antecedents of her stepmother and family, and of Lucia's unhappy life, his hopes grew stronger. He was mistaken, for Lucia, led away by vanity and levity, still drew back from graver sins with all the energy of a pure and honourable nature. Her resistance exasperated the Leona's daughters, who wished at once to disgrace and to get rid of Lucia; and in concert with her lover, they laid a plot, which was but too successful in its results.

One night, when Lucia was in her room, combing her beautiful hair, the door suddenly opened, and Colonel Gallardo entered, enveloped in his cloak,

and wearing a calañes (peasant hat), accompanied by the daughters of the Leona, laughing and joking noisily with him. They left him at the door, running away, after shutting and bolting it. The miserable girl, indignant and terror-stricken, helplessly covered her face with both hands, as if to shut out danger. The Colonel had intended to try the effect of gallant and agreeable words upon her, but he was mute before her silent and eloquent grief; for innocence appeals so strongly to the worst of men, that he must be daring indeed, who cannot respect it.

"Are you then so much afraid of me," at length said Gallardo, approaching Lucia; "of me, when my only wish is to please you?"

"Lucas, Lucas, my brother!" cried the poor child, bursting into tears.

"I'll go away, I'll go away," said the Colonel, half offended, and half sorry. He found the door locked, and returning to Lucia, said, "You see, I cannot get out."

"I was sure of it," exclaimed Lucia; "they did it on purpose: how can I ever look any one in the face again? What would Lucas, my darling brother, say?"

Colonel Gallardo felt uncomfortable; he replied, "You have nothing to fear, child. I am not fond of scenes. Believe me when I say that I am anxious to leave your room; and to prove it, as I cannot do so through the door, I will get through this window that looks out to the back."

Upon this the Colonel again enveloped himself in his cloak, and sprang from the window into the courtyard. Hardly had his foot touched the ground when he felt himself attacked by a furious man, who denounced him in no measured terms. At the same time, the Leona and her daughters rushed forward, screaming.

The unhappy Lucia cried out from the window in the greatest agony, "Do not hurt him, he is my father!"

The man had drawn out his knife, but Gallardo, who was active, and wished to get out of the affair without injuring Lucia's father, or being recognised, repelled his assailant with so much force that he fell on his back, then jumped over the railings and disappeared.

Juan Garcia rose from the ground in that state of blind fury, in which uneducated men perceive no obstacle, and recoil before no crime. He violently thrust aside his wife and her belongings, who, alarmed at the consequences of their own acts, tried to detain him, and turned to go to his daughter's room.

"Lucia! Lucia! throw yourself out of the window, your father will murder you!" screamed the stepmother, who foresaw a catastrophe.

Lucia already heard the furious voice of her father, who had been drinking, and ere he could reach her room sprang madly from the window.

"Take refuge in the Colonel's house," said her

stepmother to her, anxious only to save her life. "Your father will be least likely to suspect him; it is the nearest house, and the one where you will be the most in safety."

Lucia obeyed her mechanically, guided by that instinct of self-preservation, which alone we feel in the moments of supreme danger. Colonel Gallardo was walking uneasily about his room, when he saw the unhappy girl enter, pale as death, covered with her long black hair, frozen with terror, and benumbed by despair.

Falling upon a chair, she exclaimed, "You have disgraced me—at least save my life!"

This man, cold and selfish as he was, could not but be moved to show some compassion and kindness to the forlorn creature, whom necessity had forced to seek his protection. But he went farther than that; for he fell deeply and desperately in love with the beautiful girl, whose innocence, youth, and misfortune—the last caused by himself—so warmly pleaded for her; and she—without home, protection, or love, wanting firmness of character to resist, energy to devise means of salvation for herself, or faithfully inculcated principles of duty which would have made her prefer destitution to disgrace—allowed herself to be caressed and betrayed, deceived by a passion which, as she believed, would be lasting and unchangeable.

Colonel Gallardo immediately left Arcos, secretly carrying off Lucia, who soon became almost happy in

the atmosphere of love and luxury that surrounded her. The fit of anger experienced by Juan Garcia, added to grief, shame and remorse, had such an effect upon his enervated and worn-out frame, and his life had been for some time so intolerable, that he fell into a fever, from which he never recovered. A short time before his death he said to his old neighbour—

"Tio Bartolo, you were right when you foretold that I should live to weep for my folly. That day has come, and the sooner it ends the better."

Two years had passed since the events we have related, and five since Lucas became a soldier. His regiment was then in Cordoba, where a general recently arrived from Madrid was to hold a review of the garrison troops. On the eve of the review Lucas was in his quarters with some soldiers from his native place. One of them was playing the guitar and singing with the good temper and cheerfulness so characteristic of the Spanish soldier, unbroken by labour, reverses, or hunger, and far above considerations of material wellbeing or comfort. Presently the picket that had been on guard was relieved, and one of the soldiers as he returned to his comrades remarked, "I never saw a more charming woman than the general's lady."

"She is not his wife, at all events," said another.

"What do you know about it?"

"So they say. Besides, if she were his wife, he

would not spend so much upon her as he does. That is the way with these gentlemen."

"I suppose they are afraid of being deserted. What do you think about it, Lucas?"

"To my thinking," replied Lucas, "none of these light-minded ladies, with their glittering show and shameless ways, are worthy of the name of woman. They are more like vain peacocks."

"Lucas deserves to be made a judge, he was never meant for a soldier," said his comrade.

The following day the troops in fine array were assembled, the bands played, and the General, riding a superb horse and followed by his staff, galloped to the parade-ground.

At some little distance came an elegant open carriage, in which was seated a young and lovely woman, magnificently dressed. It took up a position near the place where Lucas and his friends formed the extreme end of a line.

"This is the General's favourite," whispered the soldier who was on the right of Lucas, "Is she not beautiful?"

Lucas raised his eyes to the lady, but, upon seeing her, changed colour so visibly that his comrades asked him what was the matter; but he quietly replied, "Nothing." The lady in the carriage had also observed the soldier who was so near her, and an exclamation of joy and surprise burst from her lips.

"Lucas," said another of his companions, "that lady is looking at you, and making signs to you."

Lucas, pale and determined, neither raised his eyes nor answered, but the other continued, "Who can it be? She knows you; she is waving her handkerchief to you, and leaning out of the carriage; look at her, man. Who is it?"

"I do not know her," answered Lucas.

"But I am sure it is your sister, Lucia. Only look at her yourself," exclaimed the one who had first spoken.

"I have seen her, and I tell you I don't know her," replied Lucas.

"Look, now, the poor thing is crying. She has not changed much; she does not look older, but she has grown more beautiful than she was. You must be blind not to see that it is your sister."

"I do not know her," repeated Lucas in the same determined manner.

There are men who feel deeply, and yet have strength of mind to veil with the snowy mantle of indifference their most distressing emotions, but they command our wonder rather than our love; and in comparison with the Ideal Humanity of the God-man, we see how much human passion loses of its sanctity, when stoicism replaces the natural expression of feeling.

The commanding officer having ordered some evolutions of the troops, they afterwards dispersed to their quarters, and the beautiful lady in the carriage soon became the subject of their conversation. Some said it was Lucia; others, who had seen her

at a distance, maintained it was not. "Her brother will tell us," said they, as Lucas approached.

"Lucas, is that elegant, stylish lady your sister Lucia?"

"I do not know the woman," answered Lucas, "and I am tired of answering questions about her."

About half an hour afterwards came an order from the General for a soldier named Lucas Garcia to attend him. Lucas obeyed it, trembling with well-concealed rage. When he reached a house of good appearance, he was shown into a luxuriously appointed boudoir, and almost as soon as he had entered the room a pretty woman in a silk morning dress rose from a sofa with an exclamation of joy, and rushed towards him with open arms.

Lucas repulsed her with his right arm, and coolly said, "I do not know you, madam."

"Lucas—my brother!" said the girl, bursting into tears.

"I have no sister," said Lucas in the same measured tone.

"Lucas—brother—let me tell you how it all happened."

At that moment, the General (formerly Colonel) Gallardo entered.

"So, Lucia," said he in a condescending manner, "you have met your brother again?"

"He will not acknowledge me," exclaimed Lucia between her sobs.

"How is this?" said the General, turning to Lucas. "And why?"

"Because it is quite a mistake, General," replied Lucas, placing his hand on his heart. "I am an only child, and have no sister."

"I sent for you," said the General, "that you might remain always about me; learn to write, and thus have a career open to you, in which you would rapidly rise, for I know you are brave and intelligent."

"I would rather not learn to write, General."

"Well," said the General with a loud laugh, "you must be very well off, if you can afford to despise the king's service."

"I would rather be king of myself," replied Lucas.

"Is there anything you wish for?" asked Lucia.

"I only wish to fulfil my term of service, and return to my native town."

"What takes you there, if you have no one belonging to you?"

"Love for my country," answered Lucas. "God gave me my land for a mother."

"Brave goose!" exclaimed the General.

Lucas was silent.

"Dearest brother, for our mother's sake do not cast me off; you break my heart! Stay with me!"

"I do not wish to be amongst strangers, Señora."

"Come," said the General, "leave the obstinate fellow alone. Let him go, and think better of it."

Lucia followed her brother to the ante-room, and

taking hold of his hand, pressed it to her heart, imploring him to remain.

"Lucas—brother—do not leave me. The General promises to do all he can for you, and he has much in his power."

"Honour and good luck do not always go together," replied the soldier, thrusting his sister from him with the moral force of a noble-minded man, and the ruder strength of an uncultivated peasant.

Lucia's brother returned to his quarters with closed fists, compressed lips, and livid with anger. His rage suffocated him, for he thirsted for revenge, and yet was incapable of a crime. If there had but been war! The soldier would have risked his life a hundred times over to raise himself to the rank that would have entitled him to demand satisfaction of the man who had wronged, and so insolently insulted his sister!—a rank that Lucas would have thrown aside the next day, like a squeezed orange, for he had no desire for riches or station. He valued his independence; loved honest labour; was attached to his native place and its customs; and would not have exchanged these things, to take a step upwards, where he would have been an intruder, an outsider, a stranger amongst those who would have been incapable of understanding his noble attachment to his country, his province, his name, and his class. This fine feeling, placed by nature in man's heart, is now being destroyed by teaching the poor to rise at any price rather than to raise themselves by their own

intrinsic worth. Lucas, then, who could not do or undo anything, suffered cruelly near his sister, and fortunately for him the General returned to Seville two days afterwards.

But the existence of Lucia had been transformed since the day when her brother had refused to acknowledge her. In the flowery path of butterfly life upon which she had been almost forced by circumstances at the age of seventeen, she had met with the shattering resistance, that a little boat without owner or helm, drifting listlessly over the calm waves, encounters when struck by a rock; the shock was terrible. In her trouble she asked herself anxiously what would become of her, outcast and forsaken, as she now for the first time realised that she might become; and the new view she took of her true position startled and terrified her. She recalled to mind the hitherto forgotten words of her brother, when he left her, "Keep the straight path, though it be narrow and thorny; walk uprightly, and look well before you." The unhappy Lucia saw no way of escape for herself from her situation, odious to her as it had now become; for she had no earthly protection to fall back upon, should she abandon her present life, and her want of energy utterly unfitted her to seek out a new path for herself, in which she might have relied upon God's never-failing protection. Her tears dimmed her beauty, her depression affected her spirits, hitherto gay and affectionate; and Gallardo became at first weary of her, and then

angry with her. Violent quarrels ensued between the lovers, and fatal discord soon followed.

When the General had to return to Madrid, in the expectation of only making a short stay there on business, he decided to leave Lucia at Seville, and she made no objection to the separation, for she had grown so tired of the life she led, that any change in it seemed welcome to her. Besides she was far from being one of the bold and insolent women who are feared, when they are no longer loved.

Gallardo's stay at the court was prolonged for some time, and he began to take part in the political intrigues of the time, and to adopt the tone of a public man of gravity and importance.

Still he sometimes unbent amongst a few of his chosen bachelor friends, and at one of his little supper parties, when the champagne had flowed freely, one of his companions inquired after Lucia.

"I left her in Seville, rather unwell," replied the hero.

"Do you know she is falling off a good deal in her looks?"

"She is only twenty-one."

"Still, a fast life wears people out. Camellias, like roses, fade in a day," said the other; "it is time Lucia took her place amongst the eleven thousand Didos."

"That cannot be," observed the General.

"Surely, the fair lady does not expect to find an Amadis de Gaul in a general of the nineteenth

century, or a Pastor Fido in a father of his country," exclaimed his friend.

"There happen to be exceptional circumstances that give Lucia a special claim upon me," replied the General; and he related the origin of his connection with Lucia.

His guests unanimously declared that it had been the object of a cleverly contrived plot to throw Lucia upon his hands, and oblige him to provide for her.

"After all, Gallardo," said his friend, "I hope you do not intend to let Lucia stand in your way."

"I don't see what that has to do with my becoming a deputy, or"——

"You think of nothing but politics. I have heard from an acquaintance of the lady's that the daughter of the banker, Don Juan la Moneda, is greatly taken with you; her mother with the title of Marquis de Monte-Gallardo, which they say is to be given to you, and her father with your talent. Come, you have a fine future before you."

"But I hardly know the amiable young lady who has thus honoured me with her notice," said the General, affectedly running his fingers through his curled locks.

"She is charming," said his friend; "Athenaïs la Moneda rides like an Amazon, has the slightest figure, the palest complexion, and the most distingué air of any beauty in Madrid."

"She is a wonderful find," said another. "Her

father has forty millions, and she is an only daughter."

"You cannot do better than marry her at once," said Gallardo's friend. "Girls with forty millions are capricious and apt to change their minds; and the fathers of these heiresses set a high value upon them too. You have no time to lose."

"What do you think of all this?" said Gallardo to his uncle, an old general who was a silent witness of this scene, with a half-satirical smile. "Give me your opinion, general."

"If you really want my opinion, it is that you ought to marry," answered his uncle gravely.

"There cannot be two opinions about that," said Gallardo's friend.

"Understand me, gentlemen," said the old man. "I consider, Gallardo, that you ought to marry, not the millionaire heiress, but Lucia."

"Surely," said Gallardo's friend, "a man of honour like yourself, General, could not advise a man of Gallardo's position to marry his mistress!"

"It is because I am a man of honour—not to be sullied by the corruption of silver and gold, that work so much mischief in these days—that I would advise the man who has done wrong to repair it, who has dishonoured a virtuous girl, to protect her. And the higher his position, the more does he owe it to others as well as himself to do this. In my time, gentlemen, people did not ask advice about their marriages in public; but their private coun-

sellors were their own hearts, consciences, and honour. But perhaps," added the old man, rising, "my opinion is as much out of place here, as I am amongst young men. Adieu, cousin; do not invite me to your grand wedding if you marry the heiress, it will not be in my way. I should be too glad to see you married to Lucia." The good old man went away, leaving the friends to discuss his remarks, so little in accordance with their own less elevated notions.

Days and weeks passed by, and Lucia, neglected and forgotten, had nearly exhausted her means of subsistence. Still she hesitated to remind Gallardo of her need, for with the consciousness of duty and shame had come that of degradation in receiving, still more in asking for, assistance from him. She had sold everything of value that she possessed, and was at length almost destitute. "What will become of me?" said she to herself helplessly and hopelessly. "I have forgotten how to work, like a sailor, who, in calm weather, leaves off managing his ship. What shall I do when I have nothing left? Will he ever remember me again?"

One day the mistress of the house brought her a letter, saying, with a cunning smile, "It is from Madrid. Perhaps the General sends you news of his return, and of his reported appointment as Governor of Andalusia."

Lucia opened and read the following letter:—

"DEAREST LUCIA,—Nothing can last for ever. Men are forced to become serious as they grow older; to

fulfil the duties and obligations of their position, and to make painful sacrifices, if necessary, to morality and custom. My family are anxious that I should make a most desirable marriage, and have arranged it so far that I cannot oppose it, except by offending a family of high station, compromising my own, and seriously injuring myself, which I am sure you would be the first to deplore. I believe you will not be surprised or even sorry to hear of my probable marriage, nor do I think you will miss me much, for you have not seemed happy with me for some time past. Perhaps some one else has already taken my place in your heart, and if you are happier than I have ever been able to make you, I shall be the first to rejoice at it. Adieu. We may possibly not meet again, but believe that I shall never forget you, and if I can serve you in any way, pray command me."

"Well," said the landlady, "is he coming soon?"

"No, he says not," replied Lucia, with the tears pouring down her cheeks. Although her feeling for Gallardo could hardly be termed love, yet after four years of intimacy her heart clung to him as to her only friend; the cold insensibility with which he had left her, could not but deeply wound and pain her; and hateful as the present had become, she could not but dread the future. The face and manner of her landlady suddenly changed, for Lucia's grief confirmed the suspicion that she was abandoned by her lover.

"Señora," said this woman, "being unfortunately in difficulties, I have been obliged to make a rule that all my lodgers must pay me in advance. The others have agreed to do so, and I hope that you will also."

"No, Señora," replied Lucia, "I am going away to-day, so I have only to pay you up to the present."

That night the poor girl went out to sell her dresses, and having paid her landlady, had only just enough left to bribe some muleteers, carrying oil to Xeres, to take her on one of their mules as far as that town, from whence she intended to walk to Arcos. The following morning at break of day she went out by the Carmona gate, looking sadly upon the sleeping city, at once as gay as a villager, as dignified as a queen, as lovely as a young girl, as full of wisdom and experience as a matron, and as graceful as an Andalusian. In Xeres Lucia was alone and without resource, but her good angel sent Tio Bartolo to meet her, the old friend of her family, and to him she humbly confided her whole sad story, adding that she knew not what to do, not daring to offer her services in any house.

"Daughter," said the old soldier to her, "the devil tempted you in that Leona's house. If you had not been so credulous with that bad man, he would not have dared to insult you. What could you expect a gentleman would make love to a poor peasant girl like you for except to betray her? But never mind the past," added he, as Lucia began to weep, "that is shutting the door when the steed is stolen. I am not one of those who cut chips from

a fallen block, or double the burden of a staggering donkey. Repentance is a baptism that restores you to the fold, and you do repent or you would not have returned to your forsaken poverty; you would soon have met with bad companions in the great cities, who would have completed your ruin. Come with me. I will persuade Lucas to receive you again, as he ought to do."

"He will never forgive me, Tio Bartolo," said Lucia sorrowfully. "He said he had no sister, and no one will make him say otherwise."

"It is true," replied the old man, "that the Garcias are an obstinate family, and that I got the worst of it at the time of your father's marriage—may he rest in peace!—but this is different. It is easier to reunite those of the same blood than to separate those tied together by the devil. We shall see. God is above all. Meanwhile you must come home with me; we are not rich, but you are welcome to all we have."

The following day Tio Bartolo and Lucia took the road we described at the beginning of this story. She rode on a donkey, and the good old man followed her briskly on foot. At the fall of evening they arrived at Arcos. How sad for those who return to their native place to feel, instead of pure and perfect happiness, remorse and sorrow—to find friends and relations no more, and strange forms and faces in once familiar spots!

Tio Bartolo left Lucia at his house, and while

supper was being prepared, went to Lucas Garcia's. Lucas, on receiving his dismissal, had returned to Arcos and resumed his work with so much credit to himself, that he had been offered many posts and advantages. His father's house had of course been sold, but as his mother's cousin still lived there, he had taken up his abode with her. Tio Bartolo entered just as supper was over.

"Will you take anything, Tio Bartolo?" said Lucas.

"No, thank you; I can wait. Will you have a cigar?"

"I shouldn't mind it."

Tio Bartolo gave a cigarette to Lucas, lighted his own, and abruptly said, "Lucas, I wish you would tell me why you never speak of your sister. You cannot have forgotten her?"

Lucas, disagreeably surprised, knitted his brow sternly, and replied, "I have no sister now, Tio Bartolo."

"What do you say?"

"I am a man of few words; I mean what I say."

"What does this mean, Lucas? What right have you to reject your sister, even if her conduct has not been all that it ought to have been?"

Lucas had turned pale and trembled with rage. "Tio Bartolo," said he with assumed indifference, "they say that we have nothing to do with the absent. Let us talk of some other subject."

"You will not evade me. Now I must tell you that you have no right to judge the repentant as

you would the sinner, and your poor dear little sister has repented. You know that 'he whose sins are mended, to God is commended.'"

"I told you that I had no sister."

"What an obstinate pig you are! How can you say you have no sister when God gave you one? Lucas, I am not going away until you forgive your sister!"

"Do not give yourself useless trouble, Tio Bartolo."

"You are just like your father. You would have made a nice pair of oxen for a waggon!"

"Señor, why do you worry me in this way?"

"I am telling you nothing but the simple truth, and there is no reason in what you say. Your obstinacy is worse than your father's, for he had more right to be determined to marry that woman than you to refuse to forgive your sister. You are twice as bad as your father. Your mother left your sister to your care. Will you neglect her last wish?"

"She would not have expected me to take care of that man's favourite!"

"You should be the last to reproach her with that, or to judge your own sister so harshly. You are not free from blame in her misfortune."

"I, señor?"

"Yes, you! What right had you to throw off the sacred trust left to you by your mother, and to enlist, knowing that for six years you would have to be on service, and not even see the poor girl? You knew the character of the house in which you left her, and what happened was no more than might have

been expected. But what is past, is past. Now, does it seem fair to you that when your sister forsakes her sin, she should have no one to look to?"

"She should have thought of that before. There are two sides to everything?"

"This is not Christian charity, to have no pity for a poor thing who erred through ignorance."

"Ignorance is no excuse for sin."

"Do you think that if you had fallen into trouble, had committed a robbery or any other crime, your sister would have been so unforgiving to you? Oh, no!"

"She would not have had the chance, for my first care would have been not to go near her. Those who bring home their faults, do more harm to others than good to themselves, Tio Bartolo."

"Lucas, how can those who have no mercy upon others, expect it from God? It is the good deeds we do that make our last bed soft, and our last sleep happy."

"Spare your trouble. You may condemn me if you will, but I do not wish to hear the name of my disgraced sister again. She is dead to me."

"Her blood will be upon your head, as surely as Abel's upon that of the first wicked brother," said the old man, rising to go. "She is better in her guilt and penitence than you in your pride and virtue."

The unhappy Lucia was inconsolable when Tio Bartolo told her of the failure of his intervention.

"There is no help for me but in God!" she ex-

claimed. "How I loved my brother in the happy days of my innocent childhood, when he was everything to me! Then he would take any trouble to please me, and promised never, never to forsake me!"

"Never mind, my child," said Tio Bartolo. "You can do without this unfeeling brother. The roof of my house is large enough to cover you, and what I have you shall share. You can help my poor Josefa, who is getting old and can't do much; woman's work is at home."

When all had retired to rest, Lucia watched in solitude, and wept over the loss of all that had once made her happy; her innocence, her poverty, and her brother's love. She recalled vividly to mind every detail of her simple life, every proof of her brother's affection, and every lost and faded hope. In the silence and darkness of the night, her restlessness and agitation increased, and at last, unable to endure the idea of becoming a burden upon the good old man who had given her shelter, or of remaining in the place where her brother's refusal to receive her would draw upon her the insult of others, she resolved to leave Arcos at once, and if unable to find work elsewhere, to beg or to starve, if God so willed. That very night, she silently opened the door, lest her kind host should become aware of her departure, and went into the street of the town. Before quitting for ever the hallowed spot, she stopped before the house where her mother had died, her quiet childhood had passed, and in which

she left the brother whom she still tenderly loved, notwithstanding his harshness to her.

Lucas also was unable to sleep that night. Agitated, uneasy, and angry as he was, his heart was heavy, and he could not take rest. Suddenly he heard at the street door a sweet and tremulous voice singing the same song he had sung to his sister as a child. He sprang out of his bed involuntarily, and raised his hands to his ears as if to shut out the sound.

The voice sang—

"Sister, I beg for God's sake,
For His and His mother's sake,
You will come to my help in need,
So may God you never forsake."

Lucas, who was in agony, sat upon his bed and stamped with rage and grief.

The voice continued more softly and sadly—

"He hastened to cut the bread,
But, alas! it was wet with blood."

Lucas, quite overcome, placed both hands before his face streaming with tears. But when the faltering and sobbing voice added—

"Who denies his sister bread,
Denies it to Mary above,"

Lucas rushed to the door, opened it hastily, and received his sister in a warm embrace.

The next day Tio Bartolo said to his wife, "When the devil takes possession of any one, he shuts every door; but so long as the Divine Majesty does not withdraw His mercy, He permits a secret door to his heart to remain open."

NATIONAL PICTURES.

A CROWN OF THORNS.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER crossing Cordova, the Guadalquivir, flowing beneath the railway, continues its majestic course, following the undulations of the country, to the Vega of Seville. To the left of the river stands the magnificent convent of San Jeronimo, now deserted and neglected; and lower down to the right, Cartuja nestles amidst its orange groves. Past the pretty stone and iron bridge spanning the river, Las Delicias next appears, with its luxuriant trees reflected in the water; and lying beyond a fringe of reeds and rushes further on, is San Juan de Alfarache, at the foot of an olive-clad hill, one of the chain of mountains bounding the plain of Triana. Between Tomares and Castilleja de Guzman is situate the most important of the numerous little towns scattered along the river-side, Castilleja de la Cuesta, on the road to the rich, fertile vine-producing Aljarafe. It may here be noted that one of the most celebrated vines of Xeres, that

producing the famed *Pedro Jimencz* wine, was transplanted from Castilleja, where it was first grown by a native of the place named Pedro Jimenez, a soldier of the army of Flanders, who brought home cuttings from Rhine vines, which acquired a finer and sweeter flavour in the new soil, providing the generous wine now known under the name of its first producer. In this town also Hernando Cortez was born, and the house in which he died here has been bought and restored by the Infantes Dukes de Montpensier, always ready and anxious to preserve the memory of religious and glorious historical events. The country owes a debt of gratitude to these princes, who thus honour and exalt her past greatness.

From Castilleja begins the large district of Aljarafe, called by the Romans the Gardens of Hercules, including many small towns all thriving by the cultivation of the vine, and owing their modest prosperity to the immense quantity of grapes and wine exported to Seville.

Years ago, when Spain was exhausted by the heroic war of independence (the Peninsular War), these rural districts were abandoned, the buildings and plantations destroyed, and suffered to remain unproductive in consequence of the inability of their ruined proprietors to restore them.

At the distant date to which this story relates, these neglected vineyards were constantly sold at a low price, and a person of mean origin who had

acquired a fortune in America, returning to Spain, determined to establish himself in the neighbourhood of Seville. Among the estates offered to him for sale was a vineyard in a town of Aljarafe, which he went to see with the agent who had recommended it to him.

CHAPTER II.

THIS place was at the entrance to a village, and the house being solidly built, had withstood time well, although its walls showed some signs of age and decay. The imposing portico remained intact, but the cracked and broken panels of the door disclosed the ruinous condition of the interior. Over the door was a niche containing a small bust of the Virgin of Peace, from whom the *hacienda* or estate took its name. The upper part of the house was uninhabitable on account of holes in the roof, as were also the wine-press and empty warehouses adjoining it. On the ground-floor lived the son of the former manager of the vineyard, with his numerous family, who received no salary, but had the advantage of being housed rent free. The mud walls surrounding the courtyard were inhabited by friendly lizards, who made themselves crevices for shelter, in which beautiful parasitical plants took root and spread luxuriantly and gracefully over the dismantled walls. Wild ivy, brambles, night-

shade, laurels, lentils, and other wild plants grew freely around, and formed a rustic retreat for singing birds, game, hens, and a few timid domestic rabbits, who all lived in clover there. A white donkey, the oldest inhabitant of this colony, grazed quietly among the plants, unheeding the gambols of the little donkey by her side, who was enjoying the brief holiday-time of these patient, inoffensive, persecuted animals.

A number of children, besides those belonging to the house, were laughing and playing to their hearts' content, and everything was in the most complete and fantastic disorder. The glory of the place was a magnificent mulberry-tree, standing near the broken-down margin of a well overgrown with ivy, which spread to the mulberry-tree, entwining itself round the trunk and branches, and forming a leafy receptacle for birds' nests. The inhabitants of the house, together with the colony of humbler dependants described, alone rescued the forsaken and neglected *hacienda* from absolute ruin and decay.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE the door of the kitchen, looking out upon the courtyard of the *hacienda* of La Paz, Cipriana, the wife of the care-taker, was seated one sunny morning. She had placed a handkerchief folded square over her head to protect it from the sun, and

was mending an old shirt she had washed, which was already patched with pieces of various texture. From the mulberry-tree to one of the balconies of the house extended a line from which hung petticoats, handkerchiefs, and small shirts bleaching in the sun. A group of children had pitched their camp under the favourite mulberry-tree, and one of them, a boy about three years old, had stretched himself on the ground, leaning his head against a dog lying by his side.

"Juaniquillo, don't lie so near Cubilon. He will give you fleas!" said a little sister about five.

"Why should he?" said a boy of seven; "fleas like dogs much better than they do us, for dogs let them alone, and we catch and kill them! Shall I say the 'Fleas' Wedding,' Purita?"

"Yes; do."

"THE FLEAS' WEDDING.

"A pair of fleas wished to wed,
But could not for want of bread;
An ant came forth to their aid,
The bread she would find, she said.
Delighted, they looked around,
If haply meat could be found;
A wolf who felt for their need,
Promised a sheep for the feed.
Now then the mutton was there,
But no vegetable fare;
So a grasshopper picked up
Some green stuff on which to sup.
The wine next with cries was sought,
From whence, ah! could that be brought?

A mosquito declared wine
He'd make from the melon-vine.
Wine and food had come at will,
Wedding robes were wanting still;
A sheep said he would shorn be,
The wedding right soon to see.
When the wedding robes were made,
Not a priest was near, they said:
A lizard crept from his hole,
To marry them without dole.
The best man at the marriage
Was a rat of tender age;
The bridesmaid, a little cat,
All at once the best man ate!"

While Pura was listening open-mouthed to the story of the "Fleas' Wedding," an old woman, poorly dressed, whose appearance eloquently told her need, entered the courtyard.

"Here is Tia Ana Panduro," said Pura. "*Joselillo*, you might as well give her the cuarto your godmother gave you."

"I have been saving my money since yesterday to buy a trumpet, and why should I give her my cuarto? You are very generous with what is not your own," replied the brother.

"With what is my own too, for I am going to give her the egg my hen laid," said Pura, running up to the poor old woman joyously, with the egg in her hand.

Cipriana told Tia Ana to sit down, while she finished mending the shirt she had already washed for her, and while she looked out some old things to give her.

"May God repay you," replied the beggar-woman. "If it were not for kind people like yourself, what would become of poor creatures like me?"

"That is why God commands us to help each other in brotherly love."

"I suffer so much that I almost long to die, Cipriana. I cannot rest day or night, my troubles are so heavy to bear!"

"Señora," replied Cipriana, "you know that the way to heaven is uphill, weary and troublesome; and that to hell, downhill, easy and pleasant. But let us bravely toil upwards, and the more thorny our path, the more safely and surely shall we reach our destination."

At this moment a carriage, passing through the open and dilapidated gates, stopped at the door, two gentlemen alighted from it, and a man who had accompanied them as postillion dismounted, calling Joselillo to take the horse to the stable.

"Who is this?" asked the old woman.

"Pascual, who was sent for to Seville to-day," replied Cipriana, "by the heirs of the deceased marquis, to show this gentleman the place. It seems he wishes to buy it."

"I wish he would, and make Pascual his head man," said the old woman warmly.

One of the visitors was an agent, the other a person in no way remarkable, dressed in a grey suit, made rather for comfort than fashion, who inspected everything with the closest attention, without be-

traying by word or look his opinion of all he saw, whether favourable or otherwise. In the evening, after seeing the vineyard and other lands belonging to the estate, when the horse was rested, the strangers took their departure, only nodding slightly to Pascual and his family as they drove away.

"Who is this gentleman, Pascual?" asked Cipriana when they were gone.

"He is not a *gentleman*, he is a *rich man*," replied her husband.

"I thought as much; he hasn't an idea of manners," replied the wife. "He never said 'God keep you' when he came in, nor *Con Dios* when he went away. Is he from Seville?"

"No, he is American, and has more gold than the sea has sand."

"I would bet a *peseta* against two *cuartos* that this rich man, who saw Tia Ana here, the very picture of poverty, without giving her a sou, is very hard-hearted. God forbid he should buy the *hacienda!*"

"Hold your tongue, Cipriana. You women are too rash in your judgments. It is quite time enough to cry out when you are hurt," said Pascual.

CHAPTER IV.

To give some account of the man who was in treaty for the *hacienda* of la Paz, Don Anacleto Ripio, we must confess that we have never been able to dis-

cover to a certainty from whence he came. He was born somewhere in the north of Spain, and his mother's brother, a schoolmaster, taught him, with considerable difficulty, to write badly, to read worse, and to reckon very well, the last being to his taste. When a boy his father sent him out to America, with recommendations to a fellow-countryman, with whom he remained more than twenty years, fitting out ships and keeping accounts, until he had acquired experience, a little capital, and a name enabling him to set up in business for himself, which he did very successfully, replying, in nautical phrase, to those who rallied him on his caution, that "the first duty of a swimmer was never to let go the rope!"

Having attained an independence by these means, Don Anacleto went to the United States, where he completed his commercial education, and at thirty years old was more staid, calm, and prudent than many men of twice his age. He could not exactly be termed avaricious, since avarice is a passion, and he was not led away by his feelings into that or any other of the seven mortal sins; his goodness, however, being entirely of a negative character, and not proceeding in any way from the heart. He considered money the means and end of all satisfactory business, and saw no pleasure or advantage in spending or giving it freely.

Don Anacleto, by nature narrow-minded and cold-blooded, exclusively accustomed to the routine of business, did everything in a monotonous, regular

way. Never had he been seen to laugh or to cry. Like a photographic picture, his moral physiognomy was absolutely colourless. He would never have thought of marrying but for a marriage proposed to him by a friend of his, an agent, for interested motives. "The daughter of Don Fulano would suit you very well; marry her," said this man of business to Don Anacleto.

"I shouldn't mind, but I have not yet seen the proposed bride," replied Don Anacleto.

The lady, who was an American of inferior rank, to whom the offered bridegroom was equally unknown, answered in similar terms, and the wedding took place within a month. The new married pair soon, however, came to an amicable arrangement to be independent of each other, as Don Anacleto's very early hours inconvenienced his wife, who preferred to take life easily. Don Anacleto Ripio purchased the estate of La Paz in the condition described, and within a year had completely transformed it. The house was coated with a cheap common white cement, and the large heavy black balconies painted bright green. The grand portico had been pulled down, because its dilapidated state would otherwise have involved useless expense, two only of its pillars and the roof necessary to the support of the door remaining. The niche and image of Our Lady of Peace had consequently been removed, and was carefully cherished by Pascual and his family.

The name of "La Paz," hitherto borne by the

hacienda, was changed to that of "La Abundancia," more agreeable to the ideas of the new owner, and written up in black letters upon the white façade of the house. The arms of its former proprietors, carved in marble over the entrance-door, were taken away, as being too antiquated and heavy for the walls. The renovation of the interior was no less thorough and complete; and the walls surrounding the dwelling had been stripped of the flowering plants trailing over them, roughly repaired, and crowned with bits of broken glass to keep out intruders.

In the great yard the brambles, ivy, laurels, poppies, and other wild plants had been mercilessly uprooted, and the ground sown with barley, which Don Anacleto calculated would support a mule for a year. The hens were relegated to a narrow dark poultry-yard, and a slaughter of the innocent rabbits had taken place; the winged songsters had been driven to flight by some shots fired at them, and by hideous scarecrows. As for the old donkey, it had been made to understand in an unmistakable manner that it must find other quarters for itself and little one; while the children of the neighbourhood had been told not to enter the *hacienda* under any pretext whatever. Don Anacleto had no pity upon the swallows either, and their nests were barbarously destroyed. In vain did Cipriana assure him that these harmless creatures, general favourites, who seek man's protection and trust in his hospitality with simple faith, bring good luck to the houses they

visit; in vain did she tell him how upon one occasion these pious birds abandoned the dwelling of a powerful knight, who had been excommunicated for his wickedness, and went to a good man's house, which so struck the sinner that he became reconciled to the Church, upon which the swallows returned to his abode. Don Anacleto declared his utter incredulity upon the subject, and indifference to superstitious ideas of the kind.

He next ordered the fine mulberry-tree, the pride and glory of the place, to be cut down; the sound and robust trunk was sawn through, and Don Anacleto beheld the fall of the noble giant with grim satisfaction, observing that the size and fulness of the branches would yield much more timber than he had expected. The children of the manager greedily devoured the fruit, without remembering that it was the last the old tree would yield; Cipriana mourned for it as for a lost friend; and the birds sang sad elegies over its dying branches. The old well was soon bordered with a margin of brick and mortar, of very modern appearance.

We must not be supposed to advocate indolence and its consequences, if we plead that beauty has a claim upon our respect and attention as well as mere usefulness; and that for this reason we regret the loss of a picturesque tree or ruin, as we should that of the innocent festivals of the people, which add a brightness and joy to their lives.

CHAPTER V.

DON ANACLETO passed nearly all his time in his *hacienda* without caring for the country, only to superintend the growing of the vines, and the sale of the wine to the muleteers. His wife passed hers in Seville, attended by a negress, who had been her nurse, and made coffee and sweetmeats very well. Thus Don Anacleto, knowing that his lady would never come to La Abundancia, did not put the upper part of the house into habitable order, but turned it into granaries, contenting himself with a small, dull sitting-room on the ground floor, with a smaller and darker alcove adjoining it. From these rooms Don Anacleto had the pleasure of observing everything that took place in the house, the people who came in and went out, what they brought, and what they took away.

"Pascual," said he one day to the care-taker whom he had appointed manager on buying the *hacienda*, "I wish to know why that old beggar-woman is always coming here?"

"Do you mean Tia Ana Panduro, Señor?"

"Panduro, what a name!"

"It's not her name, Señor; it's a nickname the boys give her, because she is so unassuming that when she is obliged by hunger to beg for *bread*, she asks for it *hard*."

"She can only come here for what she can get,"

said Don Anacleto, who hated poor people, and approved of institutions for them, provided he were not asked to contribute to their support.

"Señor, you are mistaken," answered Pascual; "Tia Ana is welcome. everywhere, and is incapable of dishonesty. As for taking anything away, she would touch nothing but what was given to her. The poor thing is ready enough to work; she cleans, and goes on messages wherever she is wanted, often walking a league for a bit of bread. Now she does commissions for us; for as your honour won't keep a servant, and my wife has to do housework and cook, she can't go out to the shops, as one can't be in two places at once."

"And can no one else go? Why don't you?"

"Señor, I am your manager and not your messenger," said Pascual decidedly.

Don Anacleto did not choose to notice this remark, as he knew the value of Pascual's intelligence and honesty, and pride is one of the radical vices from which, as we know, he was free; and replied: "I don't like this crooked copper-coloured old woman's visits."

"She certainly does look very miserable, Señor, but I am only thirty-two, and I can remember her quite active and good-looking. She has had sad trouble, Señor; Cipriana likes to employ her a little to help her."

"At my expense," remarked Anacleto.

"Is that the way the wind blows?" replied Pascual aside, adding aloud:

"No, Señor. We always help those poorer than ourselves."

"Does she have food here every day?"

"No, Señor, only sometimes, if she is here when we are going to have a meal and I tell her to sit down, for what is enough for three is enough for four. Who could eat before a hungry person, and not offer him a share? But the poor thing hardly touches anything."

Don Anacleto took up his large straw hat to go to the vineyard, remarking, "I don't like beggars. Spain is one of the poorest countries in the world, and nowhere have I seen so many beggars."

"Beggars don't prove a country to be poor, Señor," said Pascual.

"Then what do they prove?" said Don Anacleto impatiently.

"That there are many charitable people in it," replied Pascual.

"Then I am not one of them," said his master; "therefore, see that no one enters this house, your Tia Ana included."

"What did he say?" asked Cipriana, when the master had gone out.

"That Tia Ana was not to come here any more."

"She must come," replied Cipriana impatiently; "if not, who is to fetch the things? I can't go for them, shut up as I am."

"Don't mind him. If he tells me to do anything unreasonable, I say yes, and do what I think best."

"And doesn't he get angry?"

"Yes; but he doesn't quarrel with me, for he knows I suit him."

"The master and his money seem both very paltry to me," remarked Cipriana.

"He is a rich nobody," said her husband. "I like rank and riches of older date. The worst of it is, Cipriana, that these *parvenus* are not charitable like our old masters; and if charity be wanting, whatever we have, we are poor."

CHAPTER VI.

On a night of early autumn, when it was raining in torrents, Don Anacleto entered the kitchen used by his manager, whom he found sitting by the fire. As Don Anacleto had ordered Pascual to the vineyard on a trivial and useless errand, he was not pleased to find him comfortably at home, and said, "Already come back?"

"Yes, Señor!"

'Were you able to cross the stream, which must be swollen by these torrents of rain?"

"Señor, in these cases I pray to Saint Prudence."

"I am glad to hear it. What did you say to her?"

Pascual replied gravely—

"Little stream, I see,
You're too much for me.
Stay and grow apace,
Homeward will I race!"

"Then you never got to the vineyard?" said Don Anacleto uneasily.

"How could I, unless I were a fish or a bird?" answered Pascual.

"You're a lazy rogue, that's what you are," said his master; "what business have you to do as you like, when you are in my service?"

"Service is free," replied the manager; "but pray, Señor, sit down a few minutes by this cheerful fire. Although it is the kitchen, Cipriana keeps it as clean as possible. Sit in this chair, Señor. Our old master often used to sit in it in my father's days, and give us children *motas*[1] and *duendecillos*[1] to play with."

"Children ought not to be taught to play with money, it makes them avaricious," said Don Anacleto ill-temperedly.

"Not in our case, Señor," said Pascual, "for none of our family, although poor, have ever been covetous or miserly. God creates us to gain eternal and not earthly treasure, and He does not command us to be rich, but good."

"All this means, I suppose, that God commands idleness and not work. They may well say in America that the Spaniards don't like work."

[1] Small coins.

"Señor," replied Pascual, "we know very well that we must work for our living, and your honour may remember that there are always labourers to be found for all the work he can give them to do."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and Tia Ana entered the kitchen, wet and shivering with cold.

"You here to-night?" exclaimed Don Anacleto gruffly.

"I couldn't help the rain," answered the poor old woman meekly.

"If she had not brought her eggs, you would have had no supper, Señor," interposed Cipriana.

"Then don't the hens lay?" asked Don Anacleto, ignoring the old woman's trouble on his account.

"No, Señor," replied Cipriana; "since they have been shut up in that little yard they lay no eggs."

"Then let them be killed," said the master.

Pascual, pretending not to hear this order, told Tia Ana to come to the fire to dry her clothes and warm herself.

"They will soon get wet again, Pascual," replied she, still in the background.

"I think the rain will soon be over, if you wait a little," said Pascual; "come and sit by my wife. No one shall be cold while I have a fire of my own."

The poor old woman timidly approached, and sat down close to Cipriana. Don Anacleto felt rather

uncomfortable at sitting side by side with a beggar-woman; but as he was cold, he satisfied his offended dignity by looking as important as he could, without, however, producing the desired impression upon those he considered his inferiors.

"Señor," said Pascual coolly, "if Tia Ana had not persisted in not believing her husband dead she might have married again when she liked, and had some to keep her instead of going through so much misery. She is still expecting to hear of her husband and son, who disappeared more than twenty years ago."

"Yes, Pascual," said Tia Ana, "because I have always heard that everything comes to light sooner or later."

"Nothing is hidden from God, Señora, but man sometimes fails to discover the truth."

Cipriana, wishing to interest Don Anacleto in the poor woman, said to him, "Señor, it was an extraordinary thing that happened to Tia Ana. Her good husband and son, both well known and respected in the town as muleteers, went one morning on a journey to Seville with wine, and never returned. From that day to this she has never been able to find out what happened to them, although her inquiries have been unceasing." The poor woman burst into tears. "Don't cry, *Pobrecita*," said Cipriana compassionately; "this life soon passes, and in a happier world, where these lost fibres of your heart will be restored to you, we shall all be consoled in God's presence."

Pascual meanwhile went up to his master, who had fallen asleep during Cipriana's sad recital, and, rousing him, said: "Señor, poor old Tia Ana has been all over the place, and got wet to the skin to bring the fresh eggs for supper; your honour might give her something to buy a measure of charcoal, and a roll of bread for her supper.'

"I pay your wife to do the work, so she must pay for her errands," answered Don Anacleto, yawning.

Pascual, indignant, asked Cipriana to give Tia Ana half a loaf of bread, offering her in addition two reals to provide for her wants that night.

"May God reward you," answered the old woman; "the half loaf will last me for three days, so keep your two reals, I cannot bear to take it from you." So saying she went away hastily without taking the money.

"You will always be poor, Pascual," remarked Don Anacleto, who could not help feeling a little shamed by his servant's conduct; "why don't you save instead of giving away your money?"

"Señor, what I save I shall leave here; what I give I can take with me."

"You won't grow rich upon Scripture texts!"

"Perhaps not; but I am satisfied with my poverty, and would not exchange it for the anxiety of a rich miser. I value peace of body and mind most, and like 'La Paz' better than 'La Abundancia' to live in."

CHAPTER VII.

"SENOR," said Pascual to his master a few days afterwards, "poor Tia Ana is very ill with a cold, caught through her wetting the other night."

"What have I to do with that?" replied Don Anacleto impatiently.

"It seems to me, Señor, that as the poor woman took cold in bringing eggs for your supper"——

"It seems to you, I think, that it is beneath your dignity to go on errands yourself," interposed Don Anacleto; "and it seems to me that I have no right to be put to expense for all the illness in your town. If I were ill you wouldn't trouble yourself about me, I dare say. I can't endure begging, it always prevents my feeling inclined to give anything. It is very easy to be generous with other people's money, but I do not care to be made use of in that way."

"Of course no one likes to be asked for anything, Señor, I did not expect you would," replied Pascual; "but I should have been glad to help the poor thing if I could. All Tia Ana asked was that your honour would be good enough to go and see her, as she wishes you to help her with a petition."

"Petitions are things I never have anything to do with upon principle. I never beg for myself or anybody else; tell this troubl some old woman so."

"The Señor Cura charged me to tell you from him, Señor, that he hoped you would do it, as the poor woman's mind was very uneasy about it."

"The Señor Cura said so, did he? I suppose I must go if he did out of respect to him, but I really think the Spaniards are the most audacious beggars I ever heard of. What can the woman have to say to me?"

"That I don't know," answered Pascual, leading the way to a wretched little room with tiled floor, lighted only by a broken old door without lock or hinges.

There Tia Ana lay upon a poor straw mattress, raised from the ground upon planks propped up by a few bricks, and covered with a thin, ragged, old cloak. A low rickety chair, and an empty box turned upside down for a table, were the only other contents of this miserable dwelling. Nailed to the wall was an engraving of the Virgin, and above it hung a crucifix of wood and metal, the only relics of the possessions of better days. One object, however, in the midst of this poverty-stricken habitation attracted attention. Upon the box-table a small casket was placed, covered with a little white cloth, and within this, upon a pretty chair of caoba-wood, was an exquisitely carved Child-God, richly dressed in a tunic of gold tissue bordered with pearls, with a cord and tassels also of pearls, and bearing in His hand a golden doctoral staff with black cords and tassels. This holy image belonged to a convent, and was much in request in all cases of serious illness, the nuns never refusing the consolation of its presence to any, so that the loved and honoured Child-God went from rich to poor houses with sacred impartiality. In seeing

Him thus simply invested with the insignia of a teacher, one was reminded of the primitive days of Christianity, when it possessed perfect purity and efficacy from the recent communion and contact of God with created man. One can fancy the nuns saying to their sacred image as they replaced the orb surmounted by a cross, the emblem of earthly power, by this staff: "Go, Lord, to the house of the poor and sick; cure him if Thou wilt, and, above all, cure and save his soul that longs for Thee." And never had the Child-God left unheeded the prayers of the sick or of their devoted intercessors. Tia Ana kept her eyes fixed upon the sacred image, while she repeated many times this prayer:

"Holy Jesus, by Thy Father,
By Thy Mother, by Thy cross,
In my dying hour be near me,
Give me light!"

"God reward you, Señor Don Anacleto, for your great charity in coming to this poor house," said the sick woman feebly.

Don Anacleto did not answer, but Pascual replied, "Tia Ana, God is already here."

"Yes, rich and poor are alike to God," said Tia Ana.

"That is true, indeed," replied Pascual; "but explain what you want Don Anacleto to do for you."

"Señor," said the old woman, making a great effort to raise herself on her bed, "since the day my husband and son disappeared, I have been many

times to the courts of justice in Seville to see if anything had been discovered about them. I was kindly received there, and my inquiries courteously answered, but I was always told that nothing was known. It is now some time, Señor, since I have been strong enough to walk to Seville, as I used to do; and as I hear your honour returns there to-morrow, my petition was that you would be good enough to go to the court and ask if anything has been found out about them, and send the answer in writing to the Señor Cura, who will give it to me, for I should not like to die without knowing what has become of them."

"I know nobody in the courts, having, thank God, never had anything to do with them," answered Don Anacleto, unheard, however, by Tia Ana, who, exhausted by the excitement and fatigue of talking, had a violent fit of coughing.

"You may as well promise the poor woman what she wants," remarked the priest in a low tone to Don Anacleto; "for there is no difficulty in getting information from the courts, whether you know the officers or not."

"What does your honour say?" asked the poor woman anxiously.

"I will do it. Is there anything else you have to say, because I have no time to stay here?" said Don Anacleto.

"No, Señor—only to assure you that God will reward your kind action," replied Tia Ana.

Don Anacleto took leave of the priest, and left the room without another word.

"Pascual, what did Tia Ana want?" asked a neighbour, as Pascual was about to follow his master.

"To beg my master to ask for news of her husband and son in Seville," replied he.

"And what did he say?"

"He said yes; but you know, Andrea, an unwilling messenger loiters and comes home empty-handed."

"And did he give the poor woman anything?"

"Give! not he," replied Pascual; "his honour counts even his words."

"But he is said to be a good gentleman."

"You must not believe all you hear in this world, Andrea."

At this moment the priest passed them on his way out, and overtook Don Anacleto.

"He is gone to ask for something for Tia Ana," said Andrea; "and see, Pascual, your master is putting his hand in his pocket and giving money."

"Then the priest has performed a miracle," replied Pascual.

The priest returned just then, and gave the money to the woman who was taking care of the invalid.

"Is it gold?" asked Andrea.

"No, it is a peseta," replied the woman who had received it from the priest.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE time has come when we must enlighten the reader as to the fate of Tia Ana's husband and son, although she was still in uncertainty upon the subject.

About twenty years before the events we have related, two strong, active, good-looking men, were walking along in charge of a train of mules and donkeys, with bells round their necks, all moving at a steady, measured, and monotonous pace.

"Father," said the younger muleteer to his companion, "do you intend, notwithstanding all said upon the subject, to pay again this time the tax imposed by the lawyer of Mollares on his own authority?"

"It's better to pay a small tax like the others, than to dispute it," replied the father.

"It's true it is not much," said the boy, "but the muleteers who have to pay it are many, and this wicked lawyer has no right to profit by our labour, when he could not make us pay it."

"You are right, my son, it is a gross imposition; but I have consulted our companions, and they all say that it is better to pay a few *maravedis* than to quarrel with lawyers, especially with a proud, vindictive man like this."

"In my opinion, father, we ought not to submit to

this extortion any more. Our master has inquired about it, and finds it cannot be demanded by law."

"My son, this man would be a dangerous enemy. I don't wish to wake a sleeping lion, or contend with learned men."

"Leave it to me, father. Even a mad bull will sometimes hear reason."

"There is one law for good men, and another for thieves, and the latter are the strongest."

"Then we will appeal to the courts of justice against it, before they can accuse us of not paying the tax."

"That is not a bad idea. We will try to get out of it, but leave it to me to arrange, for you will get angry if they are rude, as they are very likely to be; and you know a deaf man hears better if you speak quietly, than if you scream."

Soon after this colloquy they reached Mollares, where as usual they were met by the notary demanding his arbitrary tax.

"Pardon me, Señor Notary," said the elder muleteer, Juan Isidro Alfaro, "we do not pay it."

"You don't pay? And why not?" replied the notary in a spiteful manner, which clearly showed the importance he attached to the refusal as a precedent.

"Because I find upon inquiry at the *hacienda* that the tax is not levied by authority."

On hearing the *hacienda* mentioned, the notary was silenced for a moment, but feigning indifference

said, "This is a municipal tax, and does not belong to the *hacienda*, but to the town."

"Señor," replied the muleteer, "I object to be fleeced beyond what is necessary. Travellers are not under the dominion of the towns of the district they pass through."

"Don't argue against established facts, Juan Isidro," said the notary, with apparent civility. "You greedy, sly, country people are always trying to escape the smallest tax. Pay as others do, and as you have always done before, and go on your way in peace."

"And so we shall," interposed the young muleteer indignantly. "You call us sly and greedy because we object to pay what is not due. Pray, what do you call those who falsely claim what is not due, Señor Notary?"

The notary fixed his furious and revengeful gaze upon the young muleteer, and remarked, in a slow, hollow tone, "Then you don't pay?"

"No, Señor; and if you insist upon it, we must appeal to justice to make you refund the amounts already illegally collected."

"You should govern your evil tongue better, young man," said the notary in ill-suppressed rage; "no one has ever bearded me yet, and I vow you shall not do so with impunity."

"Do you threaten me?" said the boy disdainfully.

"I don't threaten in vain, as you will find to your cost."

"Señor, this is unreasonable," said Juan Isidro.

"Leave him alone, father. Threats only open the purses and frighten the hearts of cowards," said the boy.

"You are mistaken. Mine are not intended to frighten you or to make you pay, but to avenge a personal insult, so beware of them," replied the notary.

"Señor," exclaimed the father, "curses turn to stones. Come, let us get on, my son," added he, driving on the mules.

"I am coming," replied the son, preparing to follow him, but first turning round to the notary he said haughtily, "If the threats concern me personally I fear thee not, for the device of my dirk is, 'I defend my master.'"[1]

That evening the notary, who knew all the bad characters of the neighbourhood, sent for a deserter and a returned convict to his house, and intimated to them that the following day Juan Isidro Alfaro and his son would pass that way on their return journey with a considerable sum, the produce of the sale of their skins of wine, adding that after leaving the town they would cross a thick olive-grove, where not only a robbery but the robbed might be concealed. Minds unhappily disposed to crime need but little instigation to it. How much have those to answer for who rouse these evil instincts!

[1] The motto of the daggers of Albacete, as of the swords of Toledo, is, "Draw me not without cause, and sheathe me not without honour."

To the olive-yard named by the notary to his accomplices came duly the following day Juan Isidro Alfaro and his son, far from suspecting that they would never leave it again; that the soft, sad mule-bells were tolling a funeral knell for them; and that the mute creatures who bore them were to be the silent witnesses of the terrible crime that was to end two peaceful lives.

"We have seen or heard nothing of the lawyer this time," said the young muleteer to his father. "You see how right we were not to give way to him when he was in the wrong. Flies eat those who are made of honey."

"This man is our sworn enemy, and will remain so as long as he lives," said the father, shaking his head.

"I don't think so," said the son, laughing. "It is not right that good men should give way to bad because they are overbearing and insolent."

"Still, my son, this happens every day in the world. You will see that he will do us some harm, as he has said, sooner or later."

"Hand and tongue do not always work together; and after all one man is as good as another—let him look to himself."

"Son, a loyal man's life is often in a traitor's power."

At that moment two well-aimed shots were fired from behind two olive-trees. In the silence that followed, two bodies fell heavily to the ground, both dead.

In vain did the unhappy wife and mother watch that night for the return of the two beings whom she loved with lasting affection. Days, months, years passed without news of them. Every possible inquiry was made by the authorities on behalf of the unfortunate woman, but without success. The dark, secret, impenetrable mystery gave a character of restlessness and horror to her grief, to which time could not bring the alleviation and consolation resulting from prayer over a peaceful grave. For some time justice persevered in the fruitless research, but in course of time people ceased to feel the same lively interest in what had happened; still in the heart of the bereaved wife and mother the ever-present grief was mingled with a vague hope that, like the small anchor alone remaining from a shipwrecked vessel, was sunk in a sea of bitterness. Crushed by sorrow, disappointment, and the utter destitution that fell upon her, after she had sold all that she possessed, without health or strength to work, she had recourse to what the people in Christian and poetic words call "the Purse of God," an inexhaustible purse.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER the departure of his master, Pascual had to go to Seville to settle accounts with him, and on taking leave to return to the country, he said: "May I ask if you remembered your promise, Señor?"

"What promise?" said Don Anacleto.

"That you made to Tia Ana to ask at the court of law whether any discovery had been made regarding the death of Juan Isidro Alfaro and his son."

"Are you in earnest, Pascual?"

"Why do you ask me this, Señor?"

"Because it is absurd to suppose that this old mad woman can really expect me to go formally to ask after relations of hers of whom she has heard nothing for more than twenty years, and who will probably never be heard of again."

"Still for all that, Señor, Tia Ana always says that the truth cannot be done away with, although it may be suppressed for a time."

"You seem to believe in this *Tia* of yours," replied Don Anacleto. "Tell her, Pascual, if you find her alive, as I dare say you will, for those who are not wanted never die."

"Because God spares the lives of unhappy and bereaved people, that their trials and sufferings may teach them the patience that will win for them eternal happiness."

"You have mistaken your vocation, Pascual," replied his master; "you ought to have been a priest, for you are as mystical as the holy fathers, and know more texts of Scripture than a preacher. You should tell this Tia Ana that she had better pray for some miraculous news of her people."

"Perhaps it may be granted to her," said Pascual, going away.

As he passed by Mollares he noticed a strange excitement among the people of the place. Some girls had gone out that morning from the village with baskets on their arms, to gather asparagus in the olive-yard near where it grew very freely.

"My basket is more than half full; at the foot of one olive-tree I gathered more than twenty sprouts," said one of the girls, after a little while.

"Why does the asparagus always grow at the roots of olive-trees?" asked another.

"Because the birds drop the seeds there from the branches," answered a third.

"What nonsense!" said the eldest of the party; "it is because the ploughs cannot disturb the ground under the trees."

"Come here, all of you," exclaimed one of the girls suddenly, who had been examining the asparagus growing thickly at the root of an olive; adding in a terrified voice, "Come and see this horrid thing!"

The girls rushed to the spot, and on dividing the asparagus branches, saw with alarm the finger of a man protruding from the earth, and pointing stiff and straight upwards. Struck with consternation, they threw down their baskets, and hurrying home in dismay soon spread the news of what they had seen. A crowd gradually assembled in the streets, and going to the Alcalde's house to inform him of the discovery, begged him to come and inquire into the mysterious affair. The Alcalde sent for the notary,

the surgeon, and the alguacil, some persons to serve as witnesses, and some workmen with spades, and, followed by many villagers, set out for the place where the girls had seen the dreadful apparition.

At that moment Pascual reached the village, and as the Alcalde and his suite were going in the same direction as himself he joined them. They all walked quickly and soon came to the spot indicated, and as the girls had truly declared, found a human finger blackened and dried by exposure to the air, with the nail monstrously long, issuing from the ground, as if to show where the body lay of which it formed a part. Sensations of horror and pain, mingled with those of interest and anxious curiosity, were felt by the bystanders, who were convinced that a criminal mystery was hidden beneath this olive-tree, which would be revealed by the direct interposition of God.

The Alcalde ordered the earth to be opened to see what was concealed under its surface; and upon this being done a skeleton was discovered, the right hand of which had one finger preserved to a mummy-like state, the nail having continued to grow after death in a curious way. Another skeleton of about the same size lay by the side of the first. Solemn silence reigned for a few minutes, and then the women chanted the prayer for the dead, in which the men took part bareheaded. Reverence and purity raise men nearest to the angels, and we cannot doubt that God, who created man not for an earthly but a heavenly paradise, looks down approvingly

upon the bowed heads and crossed hands of those who unite to show reverence alike to God and man in the presence of death.

The first to speak was the surgeon, who said—

"Señor Alcalde, the state of these skeletons shows that it must be quite twenty years since they belonged to living bodies."

"More than twenty years that the bodies of two Christians have not rested in consecrated ground!" exclaimed a woman.

"Some great crime has been hidden here, until God's time has come to punish it, and He will do so by means of these innocent children," said an old woman. "It is the finger of God."

"The discovery of these skeletons proves nothing, Tia Maria," said the surgeon. "They may be soldiers who fell here in the Peninsular war."

"The people always like miracles or romances. This discovery is a mere accident," remarked the notary.

"There are accidents that are providential too," replied one of the women.

One of the men who had dug up the earth raised from the grave a tattered jacket which he gave to the Alcalde, saying, "This is Spanish, at all events."

"So it is," said the Alcalde, examining it. "So it is clear that the wearer was Spanish."

"It is very much torn," said the man, still holding the jacket in his hand, "but the pocket is whole; and see, Señor Alcalde, it contains a paper."

"Let me look at it," said the Alcalde, holding out his hand. Taking the paper he unfolded it, adding, "It is a passport, necessary in those days. Señor Notary, read it; the name of its owner will certainly be in it."

So saying he handed it to the notary, who was instantly surrounded by an anxious group. Hardly, however, had he set eyes upon the paper, when he gave a loud groan, a scared look around him, and fell backwards to the ground insensible.

The Alcalde, who had hastily picked up the paper, read in a loud voice: "Passport in favour of Juan Isidro Alfaro!"

Pascual exclaimed: "That is the muleteer who disappeared with his son from my town more than twenty years ago!"

"Apparently he and his son must have been murdered and buried here," observed the Alcalde.

"It seems probable that a hidden crime has come to light here," replied the surgeon; "but, Señor Alcalde, this man," pointing to the notary, "must be taken home. I did not think him a man to be overcome like this."

"God is punishing him for being so incredulous," replied a woman.

"It may be so," said the Alcalde thoughtfully, adding to Pascual: "Be kind enough to lend your mule to carry this man to the village. But what are you making?" continued he, as he saw that

Pascual was cutting and polishing two sticks of olive-wood of unequal length.

"A cross, Señor," answered Pascual, "which I intend to fix upon this tree before I leave it, that all who see it may offer prayers on behalf of these unhappy souls so long neglected here."

CHAPTER X.

THE notary was taken home, and received all necessary attention, but hardly had he recovered from his fit, when he was seized with a violent fever, in which he incessantly repeated, "My hands are not stained with blood! It was not I! It was Juan Cano and José Salas!"

These words, constantly repeated in a loud voice, were noted by those present, who were called upon to testify to them in the inquiry held upon the discovery of the buried skeletons. The men named by the notary were at once secretly arrested, their names being not unknown to justice. As if guided by the unerring hand of Providence to make known a deed buried in mystery and oblivion, these men on hearing that the notary had denounced them, not aware that he did so involuntarily, in turn confessed the truth, and vindictively declared that the notary had incited them to perpetrate the crime. The evidence of the guilty men, separately given, agreeing in the minutest details, added to that of several

muleteers, who recollected that at the period in question Juan Isidro Alfaro and his son had had disputes and disagreements with the notary regarding an arbitrary tax imposed by him, the conviction of the crime and its motives forced itself upon the minds of the judges, and the cause was tried, ending in a sentence of death being passed upon the murderers, and of perpetual imprisonment upon the notary, who was also condemned to be present, chained, at the execution of his accomplices.

Poor Tia Ana was just recovering from her illness when she heard that the remains of her husband and son, foully murdered, had been found under an olive-tree. Twenty years of fear and anguish had not fully prepared this loving heart to receive the fatal news of such a disaster, which overwhelmed her with bitter sorrow. The mind and body of man have alike an immense capacity for endurance, and thus the poor old woman did not break down utterly under her weight of woe, because she had yet some work to do in the world.

The wonderful discovery of the crime and its authors, excited anew the latent interest of the unfortunate woman's neighbours, and she was constantly surrounded by kind, compassionate creatures, who expressed their sympathy by indignant denunciations against the cruel and cowardly murderers.

One day several neighbours were discussing the subject in the wretched home of the poor sufferer.

"These wicked men thought themselves safe from

detection because their crime was secret, but they forgot that God can bring all to light," said one.

"And to think that these wretches could see your tears and misery for twenty years, Tia Ana, and not be touched by them," said another.

"I shall not believe in justice in this world until I see them on their way to the gallows," said a man.

"That they soon will be," replied Pascual, who was present. "The trial is being quickly gone through, for the judges are in earnest about it. These ruffians have been at large long enough already, forgetting that God is stronger than the devil."

At that moment the village priest, accompanied by another person, entered the miserable dwelling of the disconsolate old woman, and after a first greeting, spoke to her as follows:—

"Tia Ana, it is well known that by the Christian and merciful laws of Spain, the rigour of the punishment inflicted upon criminals may be lessened by the intercession of the sufferers, that is, of the nearest relatives of the victims of the crimes committed. It would seem that the upright legislators who instituted these laws wished, on the one hand, to afford an opportunity of performing an act of signal piety, and, on the other, to grant a mitigation of punishment not otherwise consistent with strict justice. This gentleman who accompanies me, came to my house that I might ask you on his behalf if, like a good Christian, as thank God you are, you pardon those who killed your husband and son, as

well as him who incited them to the cruel deed?"

"Yes, Señor," replied the sorrowing woman, without hesitation or effort.

None present, not even those who had most violently denounced the criminals, protested against the answer given by the noble-minded Christian sufferer. Among the Catholic Spanish people forgiveness is looked upon as a sacred duty, even by those who, led away by passion, do not practise it themselves.

The man who accompanied the priest then said, "You will not then object to repeat before the Tribunal the pardon which you tell the Señor Cura you will grant?"

"No, Señor," replied Tia Ana.

"Offer to God, Tia Ana," said the priest, "the pardon you thus grant on behalf of the souls for whom you mourn: it will avail them more than the extreme punishment these guilty men would suffer but for you."

The following day the poor old woman was taken on a good mule, with all possible care and attention, to Seville, where she was led into the hall of the Courts of Justice in which the trial was taking place. After administering to her the oath, the judge, seeing her feeble, agitated, and exhausted state, ordered a chair to be placed for her, into which she sank helplessly. The judge then solemnly inquired; "Señora, as the offended person, do you pardon Juan Cano and José Salas, the convicted and avowed murderers

of your husband and son, and the notary, N. N., convicted of having incited them to commit the crime?"

"Yes, Señor," answered the unhappy woman, sobbing as if her heart would break.

Afterwards, while the pardon was being formally prepared which was to spare the lives of the two murderers, commuting their sentence to perpetual imprisonment for life, and to free the notary from the ignominy of appearing publicly in chains at the execution, the relation of the notary, who had visited Tia Ana the day before with the priest, approached her, and thankful that his family was spared this last disgrace said to her, "Señora, have no anxiety for your future, which we will in gratitude care for. From this time forward you will need no charity, for you will receive the due reward of the good you have done to others."

To the astonishment of all present, the miserable broken-hearted woman raised herself erect with dignity, her sunken eyes once more flashing with animation as she fixed them with ineffable scorn and indignation upon the speaker, and replied: "Not so; I do not sell my son's blood!"

After spending a few weeks in Seville as usual, Don Anacleto returned to his *hacienda*.

"Señor," said Pascual to him on the day of his arrival, "I have not found anybody to go on errands for a bit of bread as poor Tia Ana did. They all want money for their work."

"Why does not Tia Ana do them?" asked Don Anacleto.

"She is not equal to it, poor thing. She cannot even go out to beg. Your honour might help her a little, for she is in great want."

"You surely don't expect me to be fool enough to help a woman who prefers to starve rather than accept what is offered to her;" said Don Anacleto indignantly.

Pascual looked sadly at his master, and for the first time did not answer him.

"I hate pride and obstinacy," continued Don Anacleto.

"Pride!" exclaimed Pascual. "Tia Ana is the meekest of women."

"Then if it is not out of pride she refuses the help offered by those who have injured her, it must be out of spite."

"Señor, Tia Ana has proved that she can forgive with the heart of a queen."

"Then what do you call this determination not to accept what is offered from those who owe it to her?"

"It is nobleness, Señor," answered Pascual in a grave, dignified voice.

"She will have to live upon her nobleness, as you call it," replied Don Anacleto.

"And it will not fail her," replied Pascual with spirit; "she has never yet wanted bread, nor will she while she lives. There are many of us in the

town, and poor as we may be, we shall take care of her doubly now. The crown of thorns worn by her in patient Christian submission, charity, and forgiveness of cruel injury, will bring her eternal glory."

THE END.

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